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[LADY MILBOROUGH, LOOKING AT KIT'S PALE YOUNG FACE, FELT A PANG OF SYMPATHY RUN THROUGH HER HEART.]

KIT.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE day following that quiet dinner at the Leith's great house in Mayfair square Sir Phillip Desmond received a little note from Sybil.

"I am sure you will be glad to know that my little friend will be very pleased to join Lady Milborough at once. I spoke to her, as I promised you last night I would, and she expressed her willingness to do anything to oblige Lady Milborough. You must not think me very vain if I say I know she is sorry to leave me so soon; but after I had told her all you told me, she at once said she would go, and that she only hoped she will be able to please Lady Milborough. On the whole, though I shall regret losing her more than I can say, I am almost glad she has to go so soon: for I am sure she is not strong, and London tries her very much.

"Down in the country with the beautiful

fresh air and in that dear old house she will be another creature. I am quite distressed about her this morning; she looks so pale, and though she assures me she is absolutely well, I don't feel she is. You see, Sir Phillip, I am writing to you quite freely on this subject. I feel now I have a double claim to your kind friendship, and indeed I am so grateful to you for helping me in this matter. When once you have met Kate you will understand perhaps more fully my deep interest in her.

"Poor child! I do not like to question her, and somehow it seems to me as though she would tell all about herself, who she was and what her story is; but that her lips are sealed. At all events I know she will be happy with dear Lady Milborough, and I fully expect your cousin will fall in love with Kate. We are going to drive round this afternoon, so that all final arrangements can be made, and Kate will join Lady Milborough to-morrow, I should think. Is there a chance of my seeing you at the opera to night? Maurice said he should try and induce you to come. I hope you will, and then apart from the pleasure of seeing you I can tell you all that has been

settled. I shall be greatly disappointed if she and Lady Milborough do not fall in love with one another immediately. With many many thanks and my warmest regards,—Yours very sincerely,

"SYBIL LEITH."

Phillip immediately responded by a few pretty words, in which he declared most truthfully his willingness to do anything for any friend of Sybil's, and then he wrote some more letters—one of which was to Constance Marlowe, to thank her for her kindness in sending him a book which he had once seen on a visit at the Limes, and casually expressed a wish to read.

He wrote a pleasant chatty letter and stated that it was almost a certainty he should start off on his travels once again early in the autumn; but that he should with equal certainty pay another visit to the Limes before this occurred, when he looked forward with much pleasure to seeing her once again. At the end of his letter he wrote,—

"I suppose you hear often from your little cousin of the red locks who so bewitched me.

I hope her Paris school is not quite spoiling her, as Maurice Montgomery declared it would. Oh, by the way, to play the role of a gossip for once. You will be interested to hear that Maurice is engaged to be married almost immediately to Sybil Leith. He is to be congratulated. She is a charming creature!"

By the same post that this letter was delivered to Constance there came another in Kit's handwriting, the first that she sent since her departure.

Constance opened it hurriedly; she was not in the best of tempers; she was extremely disappointed that Philip Desmond should have gone back to London at this particular moment. Things had been going so well between them, and every day she had felt that she was making a step forward in his estimation, and then all at once he goes away and she is left discomfited. It certainly was very hard, and then every now and then the thought of Kit brought an unpleasant sensation.

She had had one stand-up fight with Chris Horton, who flatly refused to believe in the school story and accused her openly of having sent Kit away to some horrid place.

"If everything were all right and nothing had happened then Kit would have written to me," the boy said stoutly, championing his lost comrade right loyally. "Kit is as straight as a die, and he won't play at a game of lies to please anybody; that's why she doesn't write to me; I know her; but all the same I am her friend, and I want to know what has become of her, so please tell me."

"Kit is in school in Paris," Constance had answered very coldly, but not at all comfortably. She had never liked Chris, and now she hated him, and she was dreadfully afraid of what he would say.

"That's a lie!" Chris had answered her back, not very gallantly; but he was unhappy and angry, and his dislike for Constance was as great as her's for him.

"You are a very rude boy, and a most insulting one," Constance had said, and with that they had parted, leaving her mind in a disturbed condition. As days went by and Chris said nothing and never came near her, she began to forget him, and to forget Kit too. This letter from her cousin coming so unexpectedly, taken in conjunction with her vexation with Sir Philip, which vexation was by no means soothed when she read the postscript to his letter, made Constance angry and uneasy.

She opened Kit's note expecting she scarcely knew what, and her fair brows were knit as she read.

The girl wrote quietly and very coldly.

"DEAR CONSTANCE,—

"I am about to make a change in my plans, and I think it only right to acquaint you of the fact. Through the kindness of Miss Leith I have received an offer to live with Lady Milborough as companion and reader at a salary of fifty pounds a year. You can easily imagine that I prefer this method of earning my living to the one for which I was engaged here, and therefore I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that I have accepted Lady Milborough's offer, and that in fact I begin my duties with her immediately. My address will be Ravenshoe Mainstead, in case you should have occasion to write to me. I hope you are well, and your mother. If you see Chris you might tell him I am well, and that I never forget him. Of course it is not necessary for me to add that I have not spoken of my connection with you, and that I am known only in the name which I took on leaving the Limes.

"With once again many thanks, for the help you gave me (I enclose you a postal order for the money you lent me)—I am always your affectionate cousin,

"KATHERINE MARLOWE."

Constance was considerably surprised and by no means pleased at this letter. She was a sort of a traverser with everything at this

moment, but she chose to put it all on Kit—the girl had no right to have done what she had done without first consulting her (Constance's) wishes, and most certainly this arrangement was not one of which she would have approved.

She knew Lady Milborough well by name, and she was well aware that, old woman as she was, she held a very popular and successful place in the fashionable world. In her house Kit would be sure to meet with someone who might have seen her down at Thornton—perhaps with Sir Philip Desmond, Constance was ignorant of the relationship that existed between Sir Philip and Lady Milborough, or Maurice Montgomery; in fact, she was sure to meet Maurice, since he was now Sybil Leith's fiancé, and it was more than evident to Constance that Sybil had taken a great interest in Kit. Constance knew Sybil Leith—it was just the sort of thing she would do. When she had arranged for Kit to go to Lady Grace's household she had completely forgotten Sybil, or it might have made a difference to her plans.

She was thinking very deeply, and the more she thought the more uncomfortable she was. She was so afraid Philip Desmond would discover she had lied to him. She knew the sort of man she had to deal with, and she knew equally that this would be something such a man would neither forget nor forgive in any woman. She did not mind about Maurice Montgomery, except in so far as he would be sure to recognize Kit and tell Desmond.

She determined all at once on going straight up to London. There were so many reasons why she should go, chief of all being a near proximity to Philip Desmond, and, secondly, that she could see Kit, and personally express her disapproval of this new plan. She must go at once, or she would be too late. Her first move was to telegraph to the friend who usually played into her hands when Constance wanted emancipation from her mother's thrall for a few weeks—if she could not stay with this friend she would go to a hotel, and her mother would be none the wiser.

The thought of action, the idea that she would see Philip, and be able to continue her work of winning him, woke her out of her troubled thoughts and did her good. In her shallow, selfish, worldly way, Constance Marlowe had learnt to care for Philip Desmond as she had never cared for living and before.

Sybil Leith was in great delight. Her scheme for Kit's future seemed as though it would be more than successful. As she had foreseen and imagined, Lady Milborough conceived at once an interest and liking for the pale-faced girl with her wonderful hair, and still more wonderful eyes, who was to come and live with her and be her companion. And Kit, suffering as she was, numb almost with the agony in her heart.

It was impossible for her to resist the sweetness and gentleness of the old woman who received her so warmly, and seemed so glad to see her.

Kit was as eager now to leave the big house in Mayfair-square as she had been eager before to cling to it.

She could have fallen on her knees and thanked Heaven when she heard that Lady Milborough preferred she should begin her duties at once.

"I am sorry to rob you, my dear," the old lady had said to Sybil, "but the fact is, I want to get down to my dear old home in the country, your big, noisy, brilliant London is too much for me. I am not strong enough for it, and I want to get away at once. I should be glad if Miss Lowe will travel with me, and be introduced to my gardens before all the roses are dead."

"And Kate will go gladly," Sybil answered; "and I shall be glad for her to go, for perhaps she will be able to steal some of your roses for her pale thin cheeks. She knows how sorry I am to lose her, but I am not going to be selfish."

Kit said nothing, but her hand went out to the speaker.

Lady Milborough, looking at her pale young face, felt a pang of sympathy run through her heart.

She was old in years, but she was young in sentiment and feelings, and she felt, without words, that she was in the presence of a mental suffering almost more than could be borne. She held out her hand involuntarily.

"And so you will come? And you will not be afraid of a dull, quiet life with an old woman, my dear?"

Kit bent her head and kissed the wrinkled hand, but still she said nothing, on her beautiful eyes were eloquent with all her lips could not say.

She drove away with Sybil, in silence. Fortunately, Sybil was so lost in her own happy thoughts she did not notice the change that had come over the girl beside her. It is true she had observed Kit's pale cheeks, and the dark blue shadows round her eyes; her heart too was touched by the look in these same eyes—a strained, nervous, expression that bespoke intense suffering, either mentally or bodily.

To Sybil Leith this look conveyed only the impression that the girl was not yet recovered from the severe nervous headache that had prostrated her so utterly the day before, and Kit might have spared herself the great anxiety that beset her, that her girl friend should see a difference in her and want to know the cause.

The long awful hours that had gone since that moment when the fulness of her wrong, the absolute comprehension of the man's baseness and treachery had broken upon her, had left an indelible trace on Kit's mind and heart, developing with that marvellous rapidity which grief works in a sensitive nature, emotions, traits, of which she had not even known herself to be possessed, and which surprised her by their keenness and strength.

She underwent a sort of mental transformation as she lay sleepless through the night that seemed interminable. The sweetness, the generosity, the beauty of her nature was clouded for the moment by uncontrollable passion of bitterness, of pride, of regret. All the visionary softness of her dreamland was swept away; life stretched before her as it really was. For a time all the goodness in it was blotted out.

Kit forgot the faithful love of her old school mate, the honest, rough affection of Hogzie, and the sincere and undoubted interest of Sybil Leith.

She could only remember the dark side, the cruel, harsh tongue of the woman who had given her charity so grudgingly the selfishness and utter indifference of Constance, the jealousy and dislike that had been manifested towards her by the servants in this big house, and last of all the heartlessness, the wickedness of Maurice Montgomery, whose hand had so wantonly been stretched out to destroy the youth and beauty of her mind, to take away her heart and replace it with a stone.

She shed no tears; there is some suffering too great for any such relief. Hers was, of this calibre.

It was not the grief of a girl; it was the sorrow of a woman, and with the woman just awakened in her Kit feared lest the truth should escape her in some way or other and attract Sybil's attention, and above all Sybil Leith must never, never know this truth. Must not know indeed that there was aught to trouble Kit of a deeper nature than those almost insignificant troubles which Sybil had seemed to realize and understand without words or explanation.

It was an intense relief to Kit to find that Sybil made no remark about her appearance, except one of sympathy that her headache should have been so bad and as they drove in silence, to the big house Kit felt that the danger that she had dreaded so much was over altogether, for her strength and hold over

herself would increase as the time went on, and if her face still wore its pallor and her eyes had the same worn pained look, well it would be easy for Sybil to account for this by the knowledge of the regrets Kit must feel at leaving her. When they reached the house Sybil insisted on taking Kit up to her room.

"You are to rest quite quiet. You look as white as a ghost, and remember you have a journey before you to-morrow. Oh! Kate dear, I hope you will be happy. It seems so unkind for me to let you go, and yet—"

Kit kissed the hand she held gently.

"I will be happy. I give you my promise, dear Sybil!" she answered, and indeed she felt as though the future spent with this kind, gentle old lady must indeed be happiness, there was such an element of peace about it.

She was glad to rest as Sybil desired, and she lay very still with closed eyes lost in a maze of thought that was too sad, too miserable, too confused to be disentangled at this moment, far into the night, never moving indeed till Sybil crept crept in on her way to bed to kiss her good night and to show her much tender kindness. It was dawn before Kit fell asleep, worn out by her mental suffering, and when she awoke the sun shining in through the window proclaiming that day was well born, the day that was to be the beginning of Kit's new life under Lady Milborough's care and guidance.

To Constance Marlowe's intense annoyance she found it not easy to manage her mother with regard to her journey to London. Mrs. Marlowe had suffered a blow when Kit had disappeared so mysteriously from her roof. It was a bitter thing to her ever to acknowledge a wrong; but it was also impossible for her not to feel that she had gone a little too far in her very unjust anger with the girl and, this knowledge had the effect of making her more disagreeable and austere than ever.

Constance had a very unpleasant time, the subject of Kit had not been broached between her mother and herself. After the morning when Constance had informed Mrs. Marlowe that the girl she so much disliked would trouble her no more, as she had gone away and would accept no further charity. Constance did not enlighten her mother further than to say that she had given out to the neighbourhood around that Kit had been sent to school, as the best means of satisfactorily accounting for her absence.

The whole matter gave Mrs. Marlowe considerable annoyance and some pain; for hard, unsympathetic and ungenerous as she was, she abominated any deceit and falsehood, and moreover she had decided qualms of conscience over the fate of the girl whom her dead husband had bequeathed to her care.

When she saw this anxiety Constance confided to her mother the intelligence that she knew Kit was well and in safe hands, having received news of her, and after this she said no more. Kit's name was never mentioned, and life went as usual at the Limes. When Constance broached the subject of her proposed visit to town she was considerably upset to find her mother by no means inclined towards it, and the whole matter required such delicate manipulation that by the time Miss Marlowe found herself at last en-route to London she feared very much that one part of her errand would be fruitless.

It was almost a week since she had heard from Kit, and she had then announced her immediate departure from the Limes. By this she would be with Lady Milborough and, who could tell? perhaps already she had met Philip Desmond and had upset everything.

Constance's first duty was a visit to Lady Grace Leith, ostensibly to express her congratulations on Sybil's engagement, in reality to find out all she could about Kit. She was received by Lady Grace alone. Sybil was out riding with her lover. Constance very soon turned the subject on Kit, and her surmise was of course confirmed.

Lady Grace was full of exclamations over her daughter's strange interest and sympathy

for this maid Miss Marlowe had been so good as to send.

"I really scarcely saw her," Lady Grace said; "but Sybil took one of her extraordinary infatigations about the girl, declared her to be a princess in disguise, and never rested till she took her away from her proper sphere. I can only hope it will turn out well with Lady Milborough. I should have made some strong protest against the arrangement had it not been for the fact that I felt, with the character you had given her, she must be at least respectable and honest, and it is Lady Milborough's affair if she does not suit in other ways. They have gone into the country, and Sybil declares that Lady Milborough has already written, saying she is delighted with the girl. If so it is highly satisfactory; but you know what Sybil is," and Lady Grace shrugged her shoulders.

Constance smiled, but was not satisfied or comfortable.

"I suppose you see a good deal of Sir Philip Desmond?" she said, when she spoke. "You know, it was he who wrote and told me of the engagement."

"Yes, he comes very frequently. He dines with us to-night. Will you accept a very unceremonious invitation and come too? I know Sybil will be delighted if you will."

Constance accepted eagerly, and drove away with a pretty flush in her cheeks, looking very dainty and lovely in her summer gown and soft laces. Her heart beat more evenly now.

Philip had evidently not gone into the country to see Lady Milborough, and it would be probable that if he did pay his kinswoman a visit before she left he did not meet Kit. She could not be sure of this, of course, until after she had seen him.

She dressed for the dinner in her most becoming gown, and devised schemes as she dressed.

If he had seen Kit she must think of some story to tell him. Kit, she knew, would have said nothing to him. It was wonderful how much faith Constance had in her cousin. Lacking all noble and honest qualities herself, she was none the less glad to acknowledge their power when they could do her a service.

"I shall know the instant I look at him if he has seen her," she thought to herself, and for one moment her heart failed her, and she turned sick with sudden fear lest Philip Desmond's eyes should meet her's and scourge her with their contempt.

She realized in a moment like this how deeply the thought of this man was grown into her, how much he was to her.

Sybil ran to greet her, and while Constance kissed and was kissed, her quick eyes had gone to Philip Desmond's distinguished figure in the background.

"He knows nothing," was her swift thought, and the colour rushed into her cheeks, making her beautiful face more beautiful.

Sir Philip welcomed her warmly. He liked her very much, and he had been impressed with all the nice things Lady Sinclair had told him concerning Miss Marlowe.

Being absolutely innocent of the depths of artfulness to which a match-making mind can descend, he, of course, was not to know that Lena had allowed herself to embroider a little on simple facts, and to him the story of Constance's absolute devotion to her mother, her selfishness, her womanliness, her goodness in general made up a picture of a charming being whom it was impossible not to revere and admire.

Constance Marlowe's sharp, calculating mind was not long in appreciating a subtle change in Maurice Montgomery. Her eyes saw what none of the others saw. The restless expression on the handsome face, the constraint in the manner, the evidence in many little ways of the existence of some trouble which was new and not small.

Constance felt a thrill of malicious pleasure in this observation. She disliked Maurice, and her vanity owed him a grudge which she would pay one of these days.

She noticed that he ate next to nothing, and drank far more than was wise for him, that his manner when he spoke to Sybil was almost painfully artificial, and that on the least possible opportunity he lapsed into thoughts which was not of a peaceful nature.

She glanced now and then at Sir Philip, and was astonished that so keen an observer as he was should be blind to the change in the young man.

"It must be money," Constance determined to herself; "that is why he has hurried on the marriage, he cares no more for Sybil than he does for the chair on which he is sitting, but he wants her money."

Maurice lifted his handsome eyes at this moment, and, as he met Constance's steady gaze, he frowned, and to himself swore suddenly. He could not fail to understand the meaning of Miss Marlowe's scrutiny, and he flinched beneath it.

"Curse her!" he said savagely; "her eyes look as if they could read one through and through. She's a cat! I hate her! The sort of woman who would make mischief in Paradise! Well, she can't do me much harm, and I can show her up a bit. She would not seem such an angel to Philip if he knew she could lie in such a splendid fashion."

Perhaps something of this malice and power made themselves felt to Constance. Be that as it may, she turned her eyes away from studying Maurice—for a moment she felt a return of her former discomfort.

After dinner she and Sybil retired to a couch to chat about the trousseau and all the attendant excitement, and then Constance got that for which she had determined to angle, namely, an invitation from Sybil to be one of the bridesmaids.

"It will not be a grand wedding," Sybil said. "I mean nothing very grand. Maurice dislikes the fuss and the publicity!"

"Um!" Constance thought to herself, "not like Mr. Maurice as a general rule. What is wrong I wonder? This little fool thinks he adores her—she is easily deceived. It must be some money scrape, there can be nothing else."

It was a great satisfaction to her to realize that she would be associated with Sybil's marriage, it was a splendid excuse for prolonging her stay in town, and would afford many more opportunities for meeting Philip Desmond than she could have possibly managed otherwise.

Constance's brain was busy while she sat discussing "chiffons" with Sybil. Her first act must be to try and get Kit away from Lady Milborough before there was a chance of her meeting with Sir Philip. She did not quite know how this was to be arranged, but some plan would present itself before many hours had gone.

The best and safest way would be to see Kit personally—the journey down to Lady Milborough's country home would be a decided nuisance, but this annoyance was nothing compared to that which would most surely arise if Philip Desmond were to become aware of the truth concerning the girl in whom he had been so strangely interested. Constance could not help regarding it as a most malignant fate that should have thrown Kit into a path that must lead sooner or later, unless prevented, to a meeting with Philip Desmond.

After she had discussed her dresses and all the rest of the bridal finery Sybil turned the conversation on Kit. She knew that it was through Constance Marlowe's recommendation that the girl had entered her mother's household, and though she had determined she would ask no questions, and would wait to know all her history from Kit herself, she could not help bringing the subject up and expressing all her sincere admiration and liking for the girl whom she had so warmly befriended.

Constance maintained a very composed air, though this perpetual introduction of Kit at every turn of her existence now was irritating

to a degree. She pretended she knew nothing personally of Kit, only that she was a respectable girl and willing to work. Sybil's enthusiasm on the subject of Kit's beauty and refinement did not give Constance much pleasure, and she was relieved beyond measure when Lady Grace came to join the conclave on dress and Kit was dismissed.

In the dining-room Philip Desmond sat talking politics to Sir George Leith, and Maurice Montgomery stood at the window smoking his cigar and gazing out through the summer twilight to the square gardens beyond. A strange mood had fallen upon him in the last few days; he did not know himself—for the first time in his career of selfishness Maurice was miserable—he was learning the unpleasant lesson of keen disappointment, and something more beside, Kit's absolute silence, her absolute dignity, her quiet acceptance of her fate, filled him with an admiration, a desire, a longing, which was as near akin to love as anything he could ever feel. Now she was gone from him, now that he had lost her for ever the fulness of her beauty in nature and body rushed upon him completely.

There was for him now only one being in the wide world, and that was the girl who, by the merest chance, had been snatched away from the shame and ruin he had laid out for her. No reproach that her lips could have uttered would have aroused one tinge of the feeling in this man's breast that her most eloquent silence and disappearance had done.

He was not over sensitive where morality was concerned, but he had an uncomfortable sensation every now and then as the thought of her contempt for him came over him. And mingling with all this was the rage of a man who had made mistakes.

He was furious with himself—he, who was ordinarily so clever—to have done what he had done. He who had never been balked in his life yet, to have got what he desired almost into his grasp, and then to have let it escape him altogether.

The whole affair was something too irritating, too disappointing for adequate description, and Maurice told himself he was not only a miserable man, and very unhappy, but a fool into the bargain as he stood gazing at the spot where Kit had been wont to wander in the moonlight.

The desire to see her once again, to gaze into her eyes, to hear her sweet tender voice, became almost unbearable.

He turned savagely away.

"She ought to be mine," he said to himself, sullenly and then he set his teeth. "By Heaven! she is mine! She loves me, body and soul. She will never love again—I have that satisfaction at least. She may hide herself from me for ever, she will never change her heart. She loves me, and she always will, whatever comes!"

There was not a shadow of remorse in his heart for the wrong he would have done her, not a grain of repentance for the wanton sin he would have committed; his misery was the misery of a self-h man who suffers disappointment for the first time; his regret all for himself. Indeed, as the moments went by he grew almost angry with Kit.

He determined she should have seen him before taking herself, as she had done, so quickly from him, and all chance of meeting him.

He did not consider she had treated him fairly; he scarcely knew what to think and what not to.

His temper was not improved by so much mental disturbance; he was so sulky and evidently out of sorts later in the evening that Philip Desmond could not help knitting his brows, and Sybil's gentle heart was pained and anxious, for she thought he must be ill; and if Maurice should be ill, then was the sunshine of life itself blotted out for Sybil Leith.

And while he stood gazing out at the Square

gardens, growing angry with himself and everyone concerned, the girl, whose youth he had so ruthlessly shattered, sat under the branches of an aged tree, watching the moon-beams dance and flicker through the leaves on to the grass beneath.

The night was warm and beautiful, the sky a canopy of deep clear blue, broken only by stars; behind her stretched the quaint old house, pretty lights gleaming from the windows; around her were the grounds sweet with the scent of old world flowers—all was peaceful.

The distant sounds of the country life came only at intervals; she was alone. She sat with her arms propped on her knees, her face in her hands, her eyes were hot and tearless; her heart a pain in her breast.

She was mourning for her dead youth, her beautiful lost dreams, her broken faith, her wasted love.

She was sorrowing for the future that lay before the girl whom she already loved so well; she was suffering the anguish all pure highly strung minds and hearts suffer when the actual knowledge of the existence of evil is forced incontrovertibly upon them.

This was her grief, this her burden; but from the man who had worked the evil Kit shrank as she would have recoiled from some venomous reptile.

To her, Maurice Montgomery, stripped of all that had seemed so fair, so beautiful, was horrible, terrible; the embodiment of all false-ness, treachery, and cruelty.

The love she had borne had been for another being, not for him. She felt a rush of hot, proud contempt through her veins when she recalled him, and she prayed most earnestly that she might never see him again.

She was not afraid of him, she only wished to forget him. The past she would cling to, for it held the beauty of her illusions and faiths; but Maurice had no place in these, so she would cast him out of her thoughts as completely as she would cast away a poisonous weed that had found its way into a garden of fragrant flowers and threatened to destroy and blight their beauty.

(To be continued.)

HER FATHER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XIX.—(continued.)

WITH this threat, and a formal bow, the old sailor withdrew, leaving the confederates to themselves. The door had hardly closed behind him when Mrs. Barrat picked up the bank note, folded it, and put it in her pocket, remarking,—

"I will keep this, Mr. Wilmer. It is but a very small part of what you owe me, and if we should not be married it will be better than nothing. Your pocket-book, fortunately, is pretty well filled. Have you thought where we are to go?" she added, hastily, as her employer was about to expostulate with her upon her appropriation of his property.

"Of course not, but—"

"We can go to my sister's. She keeps a lodging-house, and can shelter us as long as may be necessary. If you succeed in getting any money from Sir Hugh, we will be married at once. If not, and you have no prospect of getting any, we must separate, and I must continue to teach for a living."

"I know better than that, Jade Barrat," declared Mr. Wilmer. "I know you have saved a handsome sum during your stay here, and that you have enough to keep you comfortably. You are not going to desert me, are you, now that I am fallen?"

He spoke with a sort of whine, that testified how greatly his mind had been broken by recent events.

"Do you mean that we shall be married—whether we are rich or poor?"

He answered in the affirmative.

The widow reflected. She was evidently weighing in the balance the honourable name of the Wilmers, the honour of having a gentleman for a husband, and the fact that she could mould him to her will, against the delights of freedom, and the chances that she might secure a wealthier spouse. The former advantages, however, seemed to preponderate, and she said,—

"Well, have your own way, Mr. Wilmer. We will be married whenever you please after our business is arranged. The first thing to be done in the morning is to remove to my sister's. The second is for you to see Sir Hugh Challis. After that we can talk of marriage."

The programme thus arranged was acted upon.

The confederates separated at an early hour, the ex-governess retiring to her room, employing herself in packing trunks and boxes. This task was completed before she slept. Mr. Wilmer packed his own boxes containing his personal property—spending hours in the difficult task, and shedding tears of disappointment as he put away the handsome garments, jewelled shirt and sleeve-buttons he had expected to wear amid fashionable scenes. Unlike Mrs. Barrat, in her distant chamber, he did not close his eyes in slumber. He paced the floor, when his work was completed, and wrung his hands in bitter anguish, feeling already the hand of retribution falling heavily upon him.

When morning came he looked like a broken-down old man, so wan, haggard and hollow-eyed was he. His spirit was half crushed, and he felt an inability to control the workings of his mind. His thoughts wandered from subject to subject without order or coherence. At one moment he mourned over his downfall and lamented his adversity, and the next he was absorbed in some trivial idea, pondering upon it as earnestly as if all his hopes depended upon it. It was impossible that such a change should not be noticed when he made his appearance at the breakfast-table. Mrs. Barrat was shocked by it, and the butler subsequently informed the house-keeper that a judgment had fallen upon his deposed master.

After breakfast a cab was ordered, the boxes were brought down, and Mr. Wilmer and the widow took their ignominious departure from the house where they had hitherto reigned supreme, desiring only to get away before Captain Heddell should arrive to witness their humiliation. They drove directly to the residence of Mrs. Barrat's sister, engaged rooms, satisfying the curiosity of the lodging-house keeper by a cunningly devised tale, and Mr. Wilmer then set out to visit Sir Hugh Challis.

He hastened directly to the chambers recently occupied by the baronet, and was informed that Sir Hugh had proceeded to Hawk's Nest on the previous day. As he lingered, disconcerted by this intelligence, the garrulous servant remarked that Sir Hugh must have come into a fortune, for he had paid all his debts, and since his departure a number of gentlemen had called to see him and had expressed their profound regret on learning that he had quitted town.

"Adam must have given him money," thought Mr. Wilmer as he returned to his lodgings to consult with the widow. "I was right—she bribed him to marry her. I suppose he'd pay handsomely if I should accuse him of the fact and offer to keep it secret."

He communicated the result of his call to Mrs. Barrat, who urged him to proceed to Hawk's Nest without delay. In obedience to her counsels he was on his way thither within an hour, full of uncertainty as to the best manner of executing his mission, but determined to work upon the pride of the

young baronet, and maintain his own innocence of wrong doing.

He arrived at the little Welsh village early in the afternoon, engaged a fly, and proceeded to Hawk's Nest as rapidly as possible. The dozen miles to be traversed seemed a score to him. He was in no mood to admire the charming scenery, the sunshine, nor the songs of the birds that made the air sweet with melody. The driver was inclined to be talkative, and spoke several times of having made the same journey recently with a mysterious veiled lady and her maid, but Mr. Wilmer was too perturbed to comprehend that his niece was the lady alluded to, and became chillingly taciturn.

"Another mysterious visitor," muttered the driver. "I suppose he's come all the way here to see the Neat. I wonder what Porrooks'll say to him."

Long as the ride seemed, it came to an end at last. Hawk's Nest in all its picturesque beauty arose before the eyes of the traveller in its green setting of trees and woods, like a haven of rest. Here, he assured himself he should do something to retrieve his fortunes. He half arose from the seat as they drove past the little stone lodge and up the avenue, but sank back again as they paused before the old-fashioned porch at the front of the mansion.

The driver ascended the steps and knocked, and then returned to assist him to alight. Bidding the man wait, Mr. Wilmer descended from the vehicle and mounted the steps, noticing that a handsome Arabian horse, saddled and equipped for a journey, was in waiting under the shade of a tree, its bridle held by a groom.

He had scarcely made this observation when he was admitted by Porrooks, who looked more than ever quaint in his strange, old-fashioned costume.

"Is Sir Hugh at home?" inquired the visitor.

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "He's going away almost immediately, sir, but if you will enter I will give him your name."

Mr. Wilmer gave his name as requested, and Porrooks ushered him into the drawing-room, announcing him to Miss Chellis, who was its only occupant.

The little lady was reclining in a *fauteuil*, her feet buried in a leopard-skin rug, and her hands busied with some intricate affair of Berlin wools and long ivory needles. She looked up at the visitor's entrance, her bright black eyes sparkling like those of a girl, and a soft, bright colour overspread her pallid cheeks.

"Wilmer!" she exclaimed, dropping her work and grasping the gold head of her cane. "Wilmer—what Wilmer?"

She arose and looked eagerly at the intruder, as if she expected to behold in him her lover who had died more than half a century before. Something of her vanished youth came back to her at that moment, and she looked exquisitely fair and gentle, strangely bright and eager, toying with her cane as if not needing its support, and standing erect.

"I am James Wilmer, madam," replied the visitor, rather awkwardly. "I am come to see Sir Hugh Chellis."

A look of keen and bitter disappointment passed over the wrinkled face of Miss Chellis. Her eyes lost their singular sparkle, the colour faded from her cheeks, and she was again only an old woman with a buried romance.

"James Wilmer," she said, leaning heavily upon her staff and looking sharply into his face. "Ah, you are the younger brother—the half-brother! It was the other one he loved—the elder one that wanted to be a sailor. Where is he?"

"The Admiral is dead!"

"Ah, yes, I remember," sighed Miss Chellis. "He became an admiral and died. He would have been sixty years old if he had lived. Yes, I remember it all now. Be seated, Mr. Wilmer," and she set the example

by sinking back again in the depths of her *fauteuil*. "The name confused me, especially as I was thinking of the past when you entered. The admiral married rather late in life. I remember he was getting along in years when his little girl was born. She was a bright, lovely child—little Adah! I heard a report that she was insane after her father's death!"

"She was insane!" said Mr. Wilmer, desperately.

Something in his tone caught the attention of the old lady, and she looked at him with a gaze so keen that it seemed to him she was reading his inmost soul. He shrank back at the thought, and this shrinking movement was in itself a revelation to her.

"Adah Wilmer is insane, is she?" she asked, conceiving an instantaneous dislike for her grand-nephew's visitor. "Is she under a physician's care?"

Mr. Wilmer stammered a negative, surprised and delighted to discover that Miss Chellis was evidently ignorant of the marriage between Sir Hugh and his niece.

"Is she in an asylum?"

"No, madam, I have preferred to keep her at home."

"Umph! Not under a doctor's care and not in an asylum! What proof have you, Mr. James Wilmer, that your niece is insane?"

"Proof?" stammered the visitor. "Why, her father was insane when he died!"

"That's no sign his daughter is insane!" was the dry response. "I think that Captain What's-his-name, who was appointed an executor with you, ought to look after Miss Wilmer a little more closely than he has been doing. I shall write him a note to that effect. And, if necessary, I'll take a trip to your residence myself. I'm the same as her great-aunt, and have a right to look after her. Let me see, how old is she?"

"Nearly twenty-one!"

"So old as that! How time flies! It was but the other day I dandled her in my arms, and now she is nearly twenty-one! She ought to be married by this time—and that reminds me that there was something in her father's will about marrying, wasn't there? A crack-brained will, if ever there was one! If she failed to marry before coming of age you were to have her property—was not that it?"

Mr. Wilmer assented, conscious that those sharp black eyes were reading his thoughts, and wishing himself safely out of her presence.

"Ah, I see!" was the significant remark of Miss Chellis. "What can all the people have been thinking about? Are all of the Holts and Wilmer families dead? Is this child utterly friendless? If I had imagined the truth—I feel positive—dear, dear, if she loses her fortune she will not be poor, at any rate! She'll have her godmother's property, and maybe Dorothy Chellis'll leave her something, instead of leaving all to that heathenish mission. But I can hardly credit it."

"Credit what?" cried Mr. Wilmer, sharply, conscious that she had guessed the truth, and betraying his guilt in every line of his haggard face. "If you mean any insinuations against me—"

"Suppose I do, what then?" inquired Miss Chellis, ironically. "Will you go to law about it? I wish you would, Mr. James Wilmer. Then we'd see about poor Adah's insanity. I tell you, I don't believe she's any more insane than I am," and the little lady emphatically flourished her walking stick almost in the face of the visitor. "Pretty proof you gave—because 'her father was insane.' Why, you poor, pitiful creature, you have almost confessed your guilt. Where can people's eyes have been? This all comes of the miserable notion of minding one's own business, and letting other people's alone. If there had been one decent gossip, or a single Paul Pry, the truth might have been discovered! Dear, dear, what a wretched world! I'm not sure but

that the heathen, with no property to quarrel about, have the best of it!"

Mr. Wilmer meditated a retreat before this storm of indignation, but, before he could accomplish the movement, the door opened, and Porrooks made his appearance.

"If you please, sir," he said, "Sir Hugh will see you in the library, if you will follow me."

The visitor arose briskly and followed the butler into the room designated, rejoiced to escape from his tormentor.

Sir Hugh was standing within the library door, booted and spurred for a ride. He was about to set out for West Hoxton, in pursuit of his mysterious bride, and his countenance wore a slight shade of annoyance at the delay occasioned by the visit of Mr. Wilmer. He advanced a step, however, with assumed cordiality, extended his hand, and begged his guest to be seated.

"I suppose you have come to pay us a visit," he said, in a friendly tone. "It is time to renew the old intimacy of the Wilmers and Chellises. My aunt will be delighted to see you, Mr. Wilmer. For myself, I regret that I am obliged to take a sudden journey and cannot remain to entertain you."

The visitor was astounded at this address. He had expected to encounter coldness and reproaches on the score of his ill-treatment of Sir Hugh's bride, instead of which he was received on a friendly footing, and treated in the most familiar and courteous manner. What could it mean? Did Sir Hugh believe his bride to be insane, and did he desire to conciliate her relative? If so, he would divide her wealth with her uncle for the sake of secrecy. Visions of wealth suddenly extended themselves before the mental vision of Mr. Wilmer, and he grew at once self-possessed and hopeful.

"My visit is not merely a friendly one, Sir Hugh," he observed, with something of a mysterious air. "It is to you personally."

"Indeed! To what do I owe the honour of your presence?"

Mr. Wilmer began to be puzzled at the quiet unconsciousness of Sir Hugh, especially as the blue eyes of his host looked frankly into his, as if they had nothing they feared to reveal. A comfortable hope entered his mind that Sir Hugh was not the husband of his niece, but that he was an adventurer who would prove an able assistant to him could he discover him. He resolved to act with the utmost caution.

"Are you married, Sir Hugh?" he asked, abruptly.

"Married!" repeated the Baronet, a rosy colour mantling his cheeks, and a sudden confusion overspread his countenance.

"Yes, Sir Hugh. Were you married four days since at an obscure church, in the presence of two witnesses, to a veiled lady?"

"How did you know it?" cried Sir Hugh, in amazement.

"How did I know it?" returned Mr. Wilmer, equally amazed, since his host was proven to have been the bridegroom, and yet did not appear to know his visitor's relationship to the bride. "Did you suppose I could be kept ignorant of it?"

"You have seen Miss Holte then? She has told you?" exclaimed the Baronet, wonderingly.

"Miss Holte?"

"Yes, I understood that you had come from her. Is she going to enlighten me at last? She has, I suppose, deemed it but just that I should know who she is, where she lives, and all about her. Is it not so?"

Mr. Wilmer stared at the hopeful, eager face—and comprehended that the identity of Lady Chellis was a mystery to her husband. He was greatly surprised to account for a marriage in which the bride remained absolutely unknown, but he accepted the fact with much inward rejoicings.

If he had only known it before, he said to himself. He would have threatened Adah

he would have boldly declared her insane, and taken her into the country.

"She is not willing you should know who she is yet," answered the false guardian, scarcely knowing how to reply to the Baronet. "In a few weeks she will tell you all."

"But you can tell me Mr. Wilmer?"

"I regret that I cannot. The truth is, Sir Hugh," exclaimed the visitor, brightening up, as he conceived a plausible explanation to allay the curiosity he had excited, "I don't know the lady you have married. I happened, quite accidentally, to witness the ceremony in St Mary's Church, and the singularity of the bride attracted my attention—in fact, impressed itself vividly upon my mind. I feared you might have been imposed upon by an adventuress, and, as I desired to visit Miss Chellis, I seized the opportunity of speaking to you on the subject."

He concluded with an eloquent speech, believing that he had satisfactorily accounted for his knowledge of the marriage, and convinced the Baronet that there was no connection between him and the veiled bride.

"The church door was locked," said Sir Hugh, thoughtfully.

"Yes, but I entered before you did. I was in one of those tall pews," Mr. Wilmer replied.

Sir Hugh looked annoyed, but his guest could not tell whether he believed him or not.

"Sir Hugh," said Mr. Wilmer, "I am an old man, I may almost say I am older than your father would have been if he had lived. Young men like you know little of the world in comparison with the knowledge of older people. If you would confide in me and tell me how this singular marriage took place, I should be happy to give you a father's advice. Where did you make the acquaintance of this veiled woman?"

"Lady, if you please, Mr. Wilmer," interrupted Sir Hugh, half haughtily. "I decline to confide in anyone. Indeed, I am not at liberty to give you the information you desire. Moreover," he added, with a keen, suspicious look at his guest, "I imagine that you know more about Miss Holte than you are willing to confess."

"You may well say that, Hugh," interrupted the voice of Miss Chellis, as the little old lady came bustling into the room, with an astonished and delighted expression on her features. "I've been listening at your door. I couldn't help it. I was determined to know what that mean creature had to say to you. So you're married, Hugh?"

"Yes, aunt," faltered the young baronet, with something of desperation in his tones. "I will not deny that I am married!"

"And to Adah Holte Wilmer?"

"Adah Holte Wilmer!" repeated the bridegroom, a sudden light breaking over his countenance. "Yes, I see! How blind I have been! But," he added, with a quick transition to gloominess, "she is insane."

"No more than I am!" declared Miss Chellis, energetically. "I don't understand how you came to marry her, but she's a dear, high-spirited girl. We must go to her at once. Dear, dear, isn't this delightful? Hugh married, and to Adah Wilmer! Why do you stand there and stare, Mr. Wilmer?" she demanded, abruptly. "Your errand is finished, I suppose. I should think you must begin to desire a change of scene. Let me tell you one thing before you go. Adah has friends now, and you had better make up your mind that your pretty little scheme is frustrated!"

She smiled at him provokingly, and added,—

"You may think yourself well off if Sir Hugh don't prosecute you for your ill-treatment of his wife. Good-morning."

The crestfallen visitor accepted his dismissal with an ill grace, and took his departure in a slinking manner. When he had gained the open air his face darkened with despair, and hatred and he muttered,—

"I have failed! Trickery and mild means have not availed me. Henceforth, to carry this matter farther, I must become a ruffian and resort to brute force."

As he made this resolution his innate ruffianliness gave character to his countenance. His gentlemanliness fell from him as a useless garment, and, as he re-entered his cab, and gave the order to return, he appeared a very different being from the quiet looking individual who had come to Hawk's Nest so recently.

He had scarcely driven away, when Miss Chellis, in a fever of excitement, ordered the carriage, assumed an antiquated travelling costume, and overwhelmed her nephew with questions regarding his marriage.

"I am not angry with you, Hugh," she said, as he assisted her into the chariot and followed her—"not a bit of it! But, dear me, how surprised I am! Tell Lake to drive as fast as possible. We must catch the first train. But where are we going, Hugh?" she added, in sudden dismay. "I did not ask that creature—"

"We are going to West Hoxton—"

"Ah! Good. Now tell me all about it, Hugh."

Sir Hugh obeyed, relating the entire adventure that had terminated in his marriage, being frequently interrupted by the ejaculations and questions of his excited relative.

"What a splendid girl!" cried Miss Chellis, when he had concluded, her eyes sparkling, and her hands industriously pressing her cane in approval. "What spirit she has! Thank Providence, her fortune's safe now!"

"But, aunt, what if she should be insane?"

"Pooh!" said Miss Dorothy, snapping her fingers. "Could you call a girl insane after outwitting her uncle like that? Bless her heart! Tell Lake to hurry. We've passed that cab long ago. How thankful I am that I'm not dead, and that I have the chance of making a new will. If she'll accept you for her husband, Hugh, why, I won't leave my money to any mission except that of making a man of you!"

Her eyes twinkled, and she ordered the coachman to drive faster.

CHAPTER XX.

In tracing human story we shall find
The cruel more successful than the kind.

Sir W. Davenant.

ILDE pursued her journey through the park towards the Dare Arms with a fleet step, and a heart in which hope would take possession despite the warnings of her judgment. After her recent interview with her ardent young lover it was but natural that she should take a bright view of her father's difficulties, and even cherish in her inmost soul a spark of faith in the ultimate union of herself and Viscount Tresilian. The soft spring morning was full of encouragement for this state of mind to one so sensitive to Nature's influence as Ilde. The sunbeams that trickled in tiny drops through the rifts in the young foliage of the trees, and flicked the smooth walks, like a shining shower; the soft, sweet breeze that caressed her cheeks and brought to her as a trophy the fresh scent of April blossoms; the blue violets that meekly hid themselves beside the path in a mass of vivid green; the timid deer that looked up from their browsing with startled gaze as she passed; the small wild creatures that scampered at her approach, fleeing to the nearest covert—all these signs of warmth, fragrance and joyous life were golden promises to her, full of cheerfulness and hope-inspiring. She almost forgot the serious import of the errand upon which she was bound, and hummed a low snatch of tender song, but the next moment, startled at her momentary forgetfulness she was again the grave and earnest maiden upon whom a

father's life and the honour of an ancient name depended.

As she neared her destination and emerged from the park into the open road, she endeavoured to assume an unconcerned demeanour, in order that none of the villagers might guess from her manner anything of the serious business engaging her thoughts. She walked in the High Street of Edenville with a careless step, passed the principal inn without a glance towards it, and entered the post-office, which served also as a haberdasher's shop. She made a few trivial purchases, uttered a smiling observation with regard to the weather, then passed out, and retraced her steps towards the inn, as if desiring to rest after her walk.

There were a few idlers about the porch and a sound as if of the clinking of glasses came through the open door. A single glance assured the maiden that Therswell was not among the group, and, with a sigh of relief, she pushed open the small garden-gate, and walked round to the quiet side porch, in the shade of which a woman sat engaged with her needle.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Hoadley," said Ilde, pleasantly. "A fine spring morning isn't it?"

"Oh, is it you, Miss Daxe?" cried the innkeeper's wife, arising, with a smile of welcome on her sharp-featured face. "It is a bright morning. Did you walk from the Court, Miss?"

"Yes, I strolled through the park. It is delightfully cool there," returned the young lady, carelessly breaking a branch from a bush of lilacs beside the porch, and inhaling the fresh perfume.

"Ladies that have a dozen horses and can ride or drive when they like seem to fancy a good brisk walk now and then," observed Mrs. Hoadley, "while folks as must go a foot'd give anything for a ride. But come in, miss. My sitting-room is as cool as a dairy, and you would do well to rest yourself a little before going back."

She took up her work, and led the way to her sitting-room, an apartment at the western side of the house. As she had said, it was cool enough, and very pleasant. Ilde took possession of a chintz-covered chair, removed her hat, and fanned herself with a paper that was near at hand.

"I feel quite warm after my walk," she said, carelessly. "Tell Mr. Hoadley I wish to see him."

The innkeeper's wife looked pleased and flattered, and hastened to do the bidding of her guest. When she had disappeared Ilde became thoughtful and troubled, uncertain what to say to Hoadley when he should make his appearance, and feeling a natural girlish shrinking from the task before her. All shrinking and hesitation vanished, however, when she heard approaching the well-known footstep of her host, and she at once became resolute and self-possessed.

He entered almost immediately after she had thus gained command over herself. His rotund person was enveloped in an ample white apron, and, to one who did not know him well, he would have seemed the personification of an hospitable landlord.

"My wife says you wish to see me, Miss Daxe," he said, after greeting her respectfully.

"Where is Mrs. Hoadley?" inquired the young lady, observing that the woman had not returned.

"She is serving beer in my place, if you please, miss. I will send her to you."

"No, you need not. I wish to speak to you alone for a few moments. Shut the door, Mr. Hoadley, and listen to me!"

The innkeeper closed the door, and returned with an expression of surprise upon his ruddy countenance at the young lady's manner and words.

Ilde arose, pale and calm, and stood before him, as if she felt herself mistress of the situation.

"Mr. Hoadley," she said, quietly, "I have no time to spare, else I should approach the subject more carefully than I am about to do. What I have to say I must say at once. You are aware of the presence at Edencourt of my late grandfather's secretary, Vincent Therwell?"

"Ye-es, miss," stammered the innkeeper, somewhat startled.

"You are also aware of his preposterous claims upon my father? You know that he pretends to possess full knowledge of some wrong doing on the part of my father, and you also know that his pretensions are false, base, and utterly without foundation?"

"I know he has a claim upon Sir Allyn," said Hoadley, in some confusion, bewildered at Ild's straightforward address and management of the subject.

"You know also, without doubt, the price he exacts for his silence?"

"I suppose I do, miss."

"Very well. Now let me tell you what I know," and the maiden looked at him sternly and accusingly, with a gaze that seemed to read his inmost soul. "I know my father to be incapable of a crime. A host of friends can testify that he is as gentle in his nature as a child. He is the soul of honour—"

"He was very wild once, before you can remember," interrupted the innkeeper. "As to being gentle, why praps he is, as a general thing. I don't deny it, miss, but a jury—"

Ild's hazel eyes flashed suddenly, her face glowed with indignation, and her lips quivered with anger.

"Hush!" she said, in a tone that made the man quail before her. "Make no such allusions before me. I am his daughter, and I will not listen to them!"

"She has all the Dare spirit," muttered Hoadley, uneasily. "She would beat the original Dare himself. If her father had been like her I shouldn't be here."

Ild did not comprehend his mutterings. With an effort she regained her calmness and said,—

"As I before remarked, my father is the soul of honour. An accusation against him refutes itself. It is perfectly plain to me that Therwell is leagued with you and another in a conspiracy against him. Had not Sir Allyn been in ill-health so long he would never have submitted to your demands, but would have carried the case into a court of justice."

"He dared not do that, miss. The case was too strong against him."

"I would have done it and broken the whole conspiracy," cried Ild, with another lighting up of her dark, magnetic eyes. "It is too late to do that now, however. It only remains to appeal to you. Therwell is determined to press his claims against us, and nothing will buy him off. My father has for years submitted to your demands, Mr. Hoadley. He has given you this place rent free and has assisted you to become a prosperous man. Is there no gratitude in your soul? Have you received all these benefits without one kindly feeling for your benefactor?"

"Sir Allyn gave because he was afraid to refuse," returned the innkeeper. "As for kind feelings, I keep them for those that pay me liberally."

"As Therwell has promised to do, I suppose?" said the maiden, quickly.

The conscious look that overspread the landlord's face was sufficient answer.

"You will be well paid for villainy," said Ild, "but have you considered what you might gain by honesty? You have not thought to ask what we would give if you would play the part of an honest man. Shawcross is, perhaps, dead. The conspiracy rests between you and Therwell. If you desert him, the case will fall to the ground. He would not dare to press it."

"He would have the written compact, miss, between Sir Allyn and him. That's equal to a witness!"

"True," said the young lady, with a sigh.

"Leave that paper out of the question, Mr. Hoadley, and speak only of living witnesses. With Shawcross gone, and you resolved to be truthful, Therwell would be disarmed. Suppose my father were to give you a deed of gift of the inn and the few acres attached to it, would you not then do him justice? Would it not be better to gain the property by an act of honesty than by one of villainy?"

The innkeeper hesitated and became thoughtful.

"If five hundred pounds in gold were added to the house and lands," suggested the maiden, "would you not take the matter into consideration?"

The landlord's eyes sparkled greedily, and his face wore an expression of avarice.

"Think of the good you will do my poor father," said Ild, softly, believing that she had at last engaged his consideration of her offer. "Think of his frail health, of his troubled existence! Think of the terrible fate from which you would rescue me! Oh, Mr. Hoadley, by your love for your children, I conjure you to deal justly with me! By your hopes of salvation at the last, when all these human cares are forgotten, and mere temporal wealth will be utterly useless, I beseech you to be honest with yourself, honest with my father, honest with me."

She concluded in an impassioned tone, full of pathos and energy; but the man to whom she appealed was deaf to everything except the promise of gold.

"Five hundred pounds, I think you said," he muttered, reflectively.

"Name your own price, Mr. Hoadley," was the reply. "You will find my father generous if you will be just!"

Again the man hesitated, his eyes sparkling more greedily than before. Then his features hardened. Whether it was that he suspected Ild of ensnaring him into an admission of his share in a conspiracy; whether he feared to own to the truth lest he should fall under the power of the law; whether he clung to the doctrine of "honour among thieves," and preferred to remain true to Therwell; whether he preferred the spoils of guilt to the wages of honesty; or whether he determined to exact an equal recompense from his ally and superior in the conspiracy to that promised by Ild, remained unknown. It was certain, however, that his expression changed, and that he had evidently made up his mind to deny her prayers.

"It's no good talkin', Miss Dare," he said, obstinately. "The truth is, I can't be bought over. Your fate ain't so bad as it might be—Therwell is a gentleman—"

"I do not wish to hear your opinion as to my future, Mr. Hoadley," said the young lady, haughtily, and unable to conceal her disappointment at his decision. "You refuse, then, to do my father justice?"

"Justice! Well, that depends how we look at it," said the innkeeper. "Do you know, Miss Dare, that you have injured your cause by coming to me on this errand? Suppose I was called upon to testify in court, I should have to say that you had tried to bribe me, and that would tell heavily against Sir Allyn. Not that I shall tell, of course," and he smiled, and rubbed his hands together, as if he were speaking an untruth to soothe her.

Ild's lips curled contemptuously. "Do as you like about telling," she said, coldly. "If the case has to be tried, I shall probably be a witness too."

She took up her hat, tied the ribbons hurriedly under her chin, and was about to take her departure when he stopped her and said,—

"My dear Miss Dare, allow me to give you a little good advice. You had better submit quietly. You cannot fully understand the charge against your father, or the evidence to support that charge. Why, he signed a compact that in itself would be enough to convict him. Therwell ain't a man to be trifled with. He won't stand any nonsense. You had

better resign yourself to a marriage with him. If you choose to resist you will not improve matters, and your family affairs will become the talk of the county. People will wonder why you should be forced into a hateful marriage, and the truth may transpire. Take my advice, Miss Dare, and submit quietly to what can't be helped."

He paused, his audacity failing him before her stern, haughty look, and he involuntarily retreated.

Without another word to him, but with angry feeling in her heart, and deepening the darkness of her sombre eyes, Ild walked from his presence, leaving him annoyed and astonished at her demeanour.

"Her pride'll be brought down yet," he muttered. "I'd like to see the Dare family humbled, that I would. Therwell can do it, and I'll stick to him. He'll have to be more liberal in his offers, though; but I can manage it—I can manage it."

With a complacent smile, he returned to his bar.

Ild passed out of the side porch without meeting anyone, and took her way homeward with a slow and weary step. She felt thoroughly depressed at the result of the interview from which she had hoped so much, and for a moment was inclined to be discouraged. But her hopes were merely lessened, not destroyed. She reflected that she had but tried the first of her plans. Others remained, and she might be successful in one of them. At any rate, it would never do to give up, with so much depending upon her.

She had come to this decision, when she reached the little gate by which she could gain entrance into the park. She was applying the key to the lock, when the sound of horse's hoofs were heard, and she beheld a horseman coming swiftly down the road from the direction of Edencourt.

The second glance assured her that the horseman was her enemy—Therwell.

He saw and recognised her at the same moment, and rode up before she could open the gate, saluting her with a bow and a mocking smile.

"Well met, Miss Dare," he said, in his bland voice. "You have been out for a little walk, I see. Did you stop at the Dare Arms? Perhaps you saw Mr. Hoadley? It has occurred to me several times that you might desire a private interview with him."

The flush that lighted up Ild's cheeks assured him that his random guess had hit the truth.

"Did you succeed in getting him to betray me?" inquired Therwell, with affected lightness. "But I need not ask. Your melancholy face tells of failure. Allow me to express my sympathy."

Ild made no reply. With a quick movement she opened the gate and withdrew the key. The next moment she ran into the park closed the gate and locked it in the very face of her persecutor. She heard an exclamation of annoyance, but did not linger in the vicinity of Therwell, hurrying as fast as possible towards home.

CHAPTER XXI.

Then thou shalt see him plunged, when least he fears,
At once accounting for his deep arrears.

Dryden

WHILE Ild Dare pursued her fruitless errand to the Dare Arms her ardent young lover hastened homewards, his bosom filled with generous thoughts of self sacrifice, and his heart fluctuating between hopes and fears. With some comprehension of the character of Therwell, he had determined to examine his own pecuniary affairs, a duty heretofore avoided, and then hasten to Sir Allyn's enemy with a bribe that would tempt him to relinquish the hand of Ild.

"He shall have every penny I own," he said to himself, "if he demands it as the price of Sir Allyn's safety, but he shall not have Ildé!"

Then his thoughts widened into speculations regarding the mysterious bond that united the Baronet to his late father's secretary. He could not believe Sir Allyn to have been guilty of deliberate wrong-doing, and began to pity him as a helpless victim in the crushing folds of a monster. Resolving to befriend him with filial devotion, he crossed Eden Park, and came out upon a pleasant green lane serving as a by-way to Tressilian Hall.

The hall was a large and handsome modern villa, after the Italian style, and belonged, as has been said, to one of the smaller estates of the young Viscount. It had a home-like air wanting to its ancestral house. The estate was much smaller than that of Edencourt, and it lacked the large handsome park, the ornamental waters, and the broad fields that tended to make Sir Allyn's place an Eden. It had, however, ample lawns and terraced gardens descending to the river's bank, and a few meadows and pastures that made the estate look larger than it really was.

The Viscount emerged from the lane into one of the gardens, and continued his way to a side porch, at which he entered the dwelling. Passing through an airy corridor, and through the wide central hall, he went to the library, and closed the door behind him.

This room was long and wide, with lofty walls lined with books, the monotony of which was relieved here and there by panelled portraits or crowning busts. The furniture had a rich but sombre look, and the carpet was of a dark sea green hue that added to the gloomy effect of the apartment.

Lord Tressilian's first act was to throw open the windows and admit the fresh sunlight and air. He then seated himself before a quaintly carved desk, unlocked it, and engaged in the examination of his late father's papers.

They were neatly packeted and labelled, just as the late Lord Tressilian had placed them but a few weeks before, possibly with a presentiment that his son and heir would soon be called upon to examine them. The young Viscount felt his new honours press heavily upon him as he regarded these evidences of his father's thoughtful care, and, bowing his head, he indulged in his natural grief for the parent so recently lost. But his sorrow was too deep to find expression in tears, and, with a heavy sigh, he aroused himself, and engaged resolutely in his self-imposed task.

The various documents were untied and examined. Deeds and leases were glanced over. Receipts for money received from various sources, and of money paid were looked at, and at last his lordship murmured,—

"I am richer than I thought. I had expected to find some heavy debts, for only lately my father wrote to me saying that he had been extravagant and had lost money. He said too that he had invested largely in a Welsh mine which had filled with water, and that his loss would be heavy. Ah, here are the certificates of his shares!"

He read them attentively, and his brow clouded as he saw that the late Viscount's losses must have been indeed heavy. He knew that those losses left him so much less to offer Therwell, and he put them away, after glancing at their sum total. Continuing his investigations, he examined all the documents to be found, and finally came to the conclusion that his handsome income would not be seriously impaired by his father's misfortunes.

"I will see Therwell at once," he exclaimed, when his search was concluded. "I will settle the matter with him before I sleep."

He was about to close his desk, and put his resolve into execution, when there came a knock at the door, and his land-steward entered the room, bearing a small packet in his hand.

"Good morning, Rosely," said Lord Tressilian, bowing. "I have been looking

over my father's papers. What have you there?"

"A letter, my lord; it came during your absence this morning," answered Rosely, advancing. "It bears the seal of his late lordship's lawyer, Mr. Jasper; so I made bold to bring it myself to your lordship, seeing that I may be able to explain anything that you do not understand!"

The Viscount took the packet, motioning the steward to a seat. Breaking the seal, Lord Tressilian drew from the thick envelope a package of papers which presented a formidable appearance, with their rows of figures neatly footed up in columns.

The land-steward watched him in silence, and with an anxious look on his honest face. Evidently he understood the nature of the contents of those papers, and dreaded the effect upon his young master. He had been the confidential adviser of the late Viscount, and had been perfectly well acquainted with his pecuniary affairs. Once or twice since the present lord's return from the Continent he had endeavoured to enlighten him upon the subject of his income, but the Viscount had not been in a mood to discuss his affairs, and he had been obliged to wait until the present moment.

"Well, Rosely," said his young master, impatiently, after a minute's survey of the papers, "I can make nothing out of all this, except that my father was in the habit of borrowing money from his lawyer. Ah, what is this?" he added, as a letter dropped from the midst of the papers.

Picking it up, he read it through with contracted brows. It was from the money-lender, announcing, in lawyer-like phrase, that he had been of considerable use to the late Lord Tressilian, but that their friendly relations had been cut short by his lordship's untimely death; and he added that he should feel obliged to the present lord if he would close the account. With a declaration that he should be happy to honour the young Viscount's paper at any time, he concluded with a host of congratulations and sycophantic expressions, which Lord Tressilian did not stop to read.

"What does all this mean, Rosely?" he asked, tossing the letter upon his desk.

"It means, my lord," responded the bailiff, "that your late father lost more money than his income would warrant, and that he borrowed of Jacob Jasper to meet the claims upon him. If he had lived he would have paid off every penny without impoverishing your lordship. A year or two of close economy would have put all to rights, and he never meant that this burden should fall upon you, my lord."

"I believe it," said Lord Tressilian, endeavouring to conceal his bitter disappointment. "So I must be poor for a year or two, Rosely? I need money, now. I have pressing need of it. I suppose I can borrow it of Jasper?"

The bailiff uttered some energetic protestations against such a step, begging his young master, as he valued his future, not to have recourse to a money-lender.

The Viscount heard him in silence without comprehending, and then closed his desk, caught up his hat, and hurried from the room and the house.

He had experienced a painful disappointment, and his mood had become suddenly reckless. He wandered down by the river's side, thinking of Ildé, and his present powerlessness to assist her, when he conceived the determination to see Therwell at once and decide his fate. He set out immediately with rapid steps for Edencourt.

As he quitted the park and came up the terrace towards the mansion he beheld the object of his visit riding swiftly up the avenue. He hastened to intercept him before he could enter the dwelling, and came up to him just after Therwell had dismounted, and was about to ascend the steps.

Therwell greeted him politely, and with a

cold smile. Lord Tressilian returned the salutation by a haughty bow, and requested a few minutes' conversation.

"With pleasure," said Therwell. "Shall we go in?"

"No; I will see you here," answered the Viscount, his face glowing with conflicting emotions. "Let me come to the point at once, Mr. Therwell. You are the enemy of Sir Allyn Dare, and have his reputation in your power."

"More than that," said Therwell—"his life is in my hands."

"His life?"

"Yes," responded Therwell, carelessly, yet with a look that gave force to his words. "But what has this to do with your wish to see me?"

"Everything," declared Lord Tressilian, impatiently. "Sir Allyn Dare has promised you his daughter in marriage. She does not love you, and shudders at the thought of becoming your wife."

"I know all that," interposed Therwell, blandly.

"You know it, and you would force her to the altar?"

"Certainly."

Lord Tressilian was tempted to strike his enemy—for such he considered the enemy of Ildé—to the ground, but he checked the impulse, reflecting that violence would only injure the cause he wished to serve. Therwell seemed to read his thoughts; his dull eyes glowed, and his lips assumed a tantalizing smile. Assuming a calmness he did not feel, the Viscount said,—

"You demand the hand of Miss Dare as the price of your silence? You cannot love her, and she will always defeat you. I suppose your object in bringing about this marriage is to become master of Edencourt. Sir Allyn will relinquish all his wealth to you if you will free his daughter, and I will give you all I own."

"Don Quixote!" said Therwell, looking at the young nobleman as if he were a natural curiosity. "Who empowered you to speak about this affair? Do you love Miss Dare yourself?"

"That is a subject not to be discussed between us," replied Lord Tressilian, haughtily. "I have offered you everything I can offer, and the reflection that you are impoverishing Sir Allyn and me will doubtless be as pleasant to you as this unsuitable marriage."

"Not quite," said Therwell, tapping his boot with his riding-whip, and speaking as coolly as if the matter under discussion was exceedingly trivial. "I have taken a fancy to Miss Dare, and am resolved to make her my wife. She has a haughty spirit, and it would be delightful to me to break it and make her meek and gentle as a wife should be."

Tressilian's face flushed with indignation. He clenched his hands involuntarily, and with an effort repressed the tide of angry words that arose to his lips.

"Is this your final decision?" he asked.

"It is. And if you will accept my advice you will conquer your love for a girl who will soon be another man's wife."

"Never, if I live!" declared Tressilian, with flashing eyes. "It is war between us—war to the knife! We will see which will conquer—love or hate!"

He turned on his heel, while Therwell laughed and ascended the steps. All the spirit of his nature was aroused in Lord Tressilian at that moment. He walked as though he were treading down all obstacles, and his face shone with the fire of indomitable resolution. Embarrassed as he was in his pecuniary affairs, worried as he seemed to be in this struggle for Ildé, he felt a conviction that he should triumph, that Ildé would yet be his, and that Therwell would be overwhelmed with ruin.

In this mood he wandered again into Eden Park and encountered near the lake Ildé

Dare on her return from her self-imposed mission. There was a somewhat lengthened interview between them, which we will not dwell upon, since it consisted principally in lovers' vows and a discussion of their mutual affairs. But when they separated both were hopeful and determined, and Lord Trenilian, to whom Ilde had partially confided the mystery of her father's life, had vowed to lend every energy to the task of freeing Sir Allyn's daughter from the hateful coils tightening around her.

CHAPTER XXII.

Like a thing of the desert, alone in its glee,
I make a small home seem an empire to me;
Like a bird in the forest, whose world is its nest,
My home is my all, and the centre of rest.

Clare.

In the midst of a fair and lovely scene, embowered in green and blossoming trees, nestled the small estate of Monrepos. It consisted of a few verdant pastures where cattle and sheep browsed lazily, a few fertile meadows that looked like emerald gems in their settings of closely trimmed hedges, and a small grove, too small to serve as a retreat for anything of the animal creation, except a host of merry birds who seemed to consider it their especial home, and who played hide and seek with the sunbeams, making the air vocal with melody. The dwelling commanded a view of the Thames, and was nestled almost upon the river's bank and was surrounded with a host of protecting trees that almost concealed it from mere casual observation.

As may be guessed, the house was not a stately mansion and did not boast of majestic proportions. It was indeed simply a cottage orné, but of exquisite beauty, and draped in a profusion of those clinging vines so often found in the descriptions of poets and so seldom discovered elsewhere. There was a long verandah, with straight, slender columns wreathed with vines in their first flush of spring foliage; there was a delicately latticed projecting window that seemed brought from Persia, and needed only an Oriental face at its panes to complete the illusion; there were graceful balconies in profusion, slender, spire-like chimneys in clusters, surmounting the roof, and various other evidences of a refined and elegant taste. The grounds were in keeping with the dwelling. In front was a well kept lawn, and at one side a pleasure-ground filled with a wilderness of rose bushes, now in early leaf, among which wandered intricate paths, all leading to a summer-house in the centre; at the other side was a prettily laid-out flower garden, and in the rear were kitchen gardens, screened from view from the house by flowering orchards, whose branches seemed enveloped in hazy clouds of white and pink.

(To be continued).

CONSTANCE CAREW.

CHAPTER IX.

"YOUR OLD ADMIRER."

"WELL, here I am! I have fallen on my feet like a cat on its toes; I am afraid Lottie Bruce was not far wrong the other day when she was rude enough to call me 'a spiteful little cat.' Never mind, cats have claws and can scratch. Cats are nice comfortable things too, if you pet them, and feed them, and take their feelings into consideration; and what can be more delightful than a kitten, a mischievous, playful, graceful kitten; how many misdeeds one forgives in a kitten that one would never tolerate in a cat. It's the part of kitten that I mean to play here; my private opinion is that I can not be so per-

fected, and a kitten falls on its feet as readily as a cat; scratches too, pretty sharply, if I am not mistaken!"

So soliloquises Myra Barlow on the morning of her arrival at Kilworthy House, Teignmouth. She is in the "sky parlour" as she calls it, a pretty little room with a magnificent view from the windows, but on the very top story of the house.

Very critically she examines the bed and bedding, the delicate chintz hangings, the simple pictures on the wall, the hanging wardrobe, the chest of drawers, and the small looking-glass standing upon the latter. This is the only article that meets with her disapproval, and she mutters to herself—

"Miss Carew will have to find me a better glass than this. I am her guest, and am not to be snubbed and put off with anything now that I am here."

Myra knows nothing of the hold which her aunt believes she has upon Constance Carew, and she rather wonders that the latter has consented to receive her; but still more had she wondered at a request from her aunt Mary, desiring her to write frequently and tell her all that occurs, particularly as regards her young hostess.

But Myra is not a girl to puzzle herself about matters that concern other people, and that are not likely to have any influence good or bad upon her own fortunes. Without giving the matter much thought, she rewards it as very clever of her aunt Mary to obtain the invitation for her, and she considers it her own business now to get all the enjoyment and profit, both present and future, that she can for herself out of it.

Her wardrobe is in a better condition than usual, principally due to the fact that several of the elder girls on leaving school have made her presents of articles of attire and little bits of finery, all of which her clever fingers have turned to the best possible account.

She looks very young, almost childish, as she stands before the deepened looking-glass, arranging a dazzlingly bright bit of colour at her throat; for her "frook," as she calls it, is a navy blue serge, with a sailor collar, and only the brilliant bandkerchief, which she ties in a sailor's knot, relieves its dark hue.

But this is just the style of thing that suits Myra, and she knows it. Her sallow and rather hollow cheeks catch a faint reflection from the bright scarf, her dark eyes are eager with anticipation, her hair is very becomingly arranged, and with that smile upon her lips she looks almost beautiful; but provoke her to frown and be sulky, and you will see that she is almost ugly.

Satisfied with her own appearance, she leaves her room and descends the staircase. As yet she is not acquainted with the geography of the house, and she has reached the ground-floor before she meets any of the servants, and then it is old Jennifer whom she calls with the question,—

"Where is Miss Carew?"

The woman points to the garden, but utters never a word.

She had taken a good long stare at Myra's face when she arrived, and she had instantly decided that she did not like it, hence her silence.

Accustomed to treat servants as she is sometimes treated herself, with disdain and hauteur, the consequential little body turns without a word of thanks, and trips into the garden as though she were quite at home.

A few steps bring her in view of Constance Carew with two young ladies and a young gentleman, the visitors seeming to be talking together very earnestly.

None of the group perceive Myra, and she, taking advantage of a high privet hedge, which forms a screen for certain choice plants, approaches the party and listens to their conversation.

"It's wretchedly uncomfortable for us," Nellie Treleaven is saying; "there's a mawing all day as though we had a funeral in the house. Of course it's very absurd at

her time of life to go on so, but the absurdity does not do away with the discomfort, and I thought if Captain Carew would go round and see her, they might be able to settle matters between them."

"I think my father has gone to Torquay with Sir Wilfred Marshall," replies Constance, coldly; "but he will be back to dinner."

"I think it is both selfish and mean of Captain Carew to try to force my mother to marry him without settlements!" exclaims Kate Treleaven, hotly. "It is like trying to rob us of our birthright, for poor foolish papa left almost everything in our mother's hands; and though her trustees may prevent her from getting hold of the money while she lives, they can't keep her from leaving it to anybody she likes when she dies, so settlements are our only safeguard. I really think you ought to speak to your father on the subject, Constance!"

"I have nothing to do with the matter," replies our heroine, coldly, "and I decline to take any part in it. You must know, Miss Treleaven, that the whole affair is most distasteful to me, and I am only surprised that you do not share my feelings on the subject!"

Kate looks mortified, but makes no immediate reply. Nellie mutters,—

"There are wheels within wheels; but we didn't bargain for this kind of thing you know. What worries me most is the way in which ma takes on; but in any case you might ask the Captain to come round this evening, Constance."

"Very well," is the reply.

"And suppose you come back with us now," suggests Nellie; "it would be quite a charity to do so, and then your father is sure to fetch you."

"Thank you, I cannot; I have a friend who has just come to stay with me. I wonder where she can be?"

Myra stays to hear no more, but doubles round a clump of laurels and presently is seen from quite another direction coming towards the group.

Her quick wit has enabled her to put two and two together, and she knows pretty well the state of affairs without further explanation.

Myra's appearance makes a pleasant change in the conversation; she is bright and vivacious, full of admiration of Teignmouth, and she asks numerous questions, talks of boating and driving, and shows pretty plainly to Constance, as well as to her friends, that while she is here she expects to be amused.

Nellie and she take to each other at once. James is not quite sure whether he admires her or not; and Kate, with one of those unreasoning feelings of repulsion which often warn us of an insidious foe, feels at the first glance at Myra's dark eyes, slightly flushed cheeks, and lips parted in a smile to show her even teeth, that she positively and emphatically dislikes her.

They are still talking, though they have wandered on nearer to the front of the house, and are in view of the wide gates at the end of the carriage drive.

Myra is trying to arrange for going out in a boat on the following day, and Nellie is quite ready to second the idea, but James is doubtful; and Constance, when appealed to, declines to make any arrangement without the approval of her father.

At this juncture a gentleman is seen coming through the gates towards the house, and Kate Treleaven, with a slightly heightened colour, exclaims,—

"Leonard Catchbull!"

Myra glances at Constance, and fails to detect any trace of satisfaction upon her countenance; then she looks steadily at the man who is approaching them, and with whom the Treleavens appear to be upon very familiar terms.

He greets them all, is introduced to Myra. Then addressing Constance, he says,—

"I called to see Captain Carew; is he at home?"

The reply is in the negative; indeed, it would have surprised the lawyer if it had not been, seeing that he himself witnessed the Captain's departure by train two or three hours ago.

He shows no inclination to leave, however, but talks about the weather, and the garden, and the flowers, until Nellie, to her sister's annoyance, says,—

"Mr. Catchbull, we want to have a little trip to-morrow by water; will you join us?"

He hesitates, looks at the other ladies, and Kate says, promptly,—

"I shall not go, and Constance has just said that she will not, so the party won't be a large one."

"And it has suddenly occurred to me that I have an engagement for to-morrow that will take up most of the day, and my sister, Mrs. Rawlston, will arrive by the six o'clock train, with her children, and governess, and nurse," says Mr. Catchbull. "I have taken one of the houses near the pier for them."

"Oh, I shall be so glad to see them!" exclaims Kate Trevelyan, in a tone which makes Myra wonder if she, more than any other of the party, has a particular right to feel interested in Mr. Catchbull's relatives.

She observes, however, that Constance says nothing, and that she is only barely polite and civil to the lawyer; while he, on his part, seems as though he could scarcely withdraw his eyes from her face.

"I wonder what there is about Constance Carew that makes all the men want to marry her!" muses Myra. "Some people might say it is her money, but it isn't that altogether; no amount of money could make that man's eyes look as they do when he is gazing at her. And then there are men who would rather not marry a rich woman; Mr. Balderson, for instance, I know he is desperately in love with Miss Carew, for I have watched his face when she was in the room, and yet I have heard him say that a man must be very much in love or lost to all self-respect, who married a rich woman. By the way, Mr. Balderson ought to be here about this time!"

So ran her thoughts, while James Trevelyan and Leonard Catchbull seem to vie with each other to absorb Constance Carew's attention.

Presently Kate asks some question about Mrs. Rawlston and her family, and the name strikes Myra as it did not at first, and she muses thoughtfully.

"I have heard that name before; where was it, I wonder?"

But she fails to answer the question, and she dismisses the matter from her mind, satisfied that the solution will presently come unthought.

"You had better come back with us, Constance, and bring your friend with you," remarks Kate Trevelyan, carelessly.

"No, thank you, not to-day," is the decided response, whereupon Miss Trevelyan says promptly.

"Very well then, we must go. Come along Nellie. Are you going our way, Mr. Catchbull?"

"No," he replies, calmly. Then observing the deep frown upon her face, he adds, indifferently, "I shall probably call this evening!"

But, for all that, they all leave the garden together, for Constance says formally to the lawyer,—

"I will tell papa that you called, Mr. Catchbull; and I will give your message from Mrs. Trevelyan to him Nellie. Good-bye!" and they depart, though the gentlemen go reluctantly.

"I like that girl Nellie!" remarks Myra, when she and her young hostess are alone.

"Yes, she is the best of the family!" responds Constance absently, and then there is silence between them, broken by Constance asking carelessly,—

"Shall we have tea in the garden or in the drawing room?"

"Oh, in the garden, of course!" replies Myra, quickly. "I could live in the open air at this time of the year, and I do want to go down to the shore. You'll come out for a walk with me after tea, won't you, Miss Carew?"

"Yes, if you wish it," replies the latter, languidly.

"Of course I wish it!" asserts the girl. "I adore the sea, I think I could spend my life upon the shore. It was awfully good of you to invite me here, Miss Carew, and I mean to enjoy my visit thoroughly!"

"Quite so!" asserts Constance. But her manner is so thoroughly unsympathetic, and she shows so little warmth of feeling, that Myra, who is quick to read her thoughts and understand her moods, asks suddenly and suspiciously,—

"Why did you invite me to come here, Miss Carew?"

Constance is so taken aback by this abrupt and direct question, that she answers at once without evasion,—

"Don't you know?"

"No, I know nothing, except that Aunt Mary told me yesterday, when I arrived at Badleigh Salterton, where she is staying with some cousins as ill-tempered as herself, that they didn't want me there, but she had been over to see you, and you had invited me here for as long as I liked to stay. I needn't tell you that I was delighted to hear it!"

"And was that positively all that passed between your aunt and yourself about coming here?" asks Constance, suspiciously.

"Yes, everything, except that she told me to write to her frequently, tell her where we went and what we did, and all that kind of thing. I suppose the truth is, she asked you to take me!"

"She suggested it!" assents Constance; "otherwise I should not have thought of inviting anyone here at the present time, everything is so different from my anticipations!"

"Yes, I am beginning to see that it is so," rejoins Myra; "but don't stand on ceremony with me, and when you don't feel inclined to go out, let me go alone; I shan't mind in the least, and I shan't take any notice if things aren't always smooth. When is the wedding to take place?"

"It was fixed for the twenty-ninth of September," replies Constance; "but there may be a delay. And now tell me about the girls I left behind me," she says, seeming to slip a load from off her mind, and speaking in a more natural tone. "Margaret Sanderson has gone to India, I suppose?"

"No, she sails next week," is the answer; "and Edith Calver went to her situation last Thursday."

Then she goes on to talk about the other pupils, whose names and history do not concern us, and the two girls are chatting together quite naturally, pretty much as they might have done a couple of months ago, when Captain Carew and Sir Wilfred Marshall, having come through the house, join them.

Temporary forgetfulness is not peculiar to youth, although young people are apt to forget for a moment a misfortune, a crime or a wrong, more readily than those of maturer years; and Constance Carew, unexpectedly seeing her father and Sir Wilfred, smiles such a welcome that the Captain secretly rejoices in his wisdom in allowing her to have a companion; while the young Baronet's countenance beams with delight, and he accepts that smile as a distinct encouragement to his suit.

In that smile the girl's heart spoke; but instantly memory asserts its sway, a shudder passes over her frame, and her manner is so cold and chilling that Myra asks, impulsively,—

"What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Oh, no, it is nothing," she answers, with ill-concealed vexation at having her face so closely watched, and she turns to her father and remarks,—

"You are home earlier than you anticipated, are you not, papa?"

"Yes, Torquay was so insufferably hot," replies the Captain, "and my old colonel, Elsmere, as ill luck would have it, had gone for a cruise in a friend's yacht. Sir Wilfred was equally unfortunate with regard to the man whom he went to see; so we thought the best thing we could do was to come home again."

He smiles upon Myra as he speaks. He has already welcomed her. He thinks her a pretty bright little girl, only just emerged from childhood. She brings with her also the charm of novelty; while she on her part is only too desirous to please.

"It was very kind of you to return," she murmurs. "I had just extorted a promise from Miss Carew to walk with me near the sea before dinner, but you will be too tired to go with us, won't you?"

"Tired! Not a bit of it," replies the Captain, with a light laugh. "We are not so easily tired as that, are we, Sir Wilfred?"

The Baronet laughs too, and remarks that they have been too lazy to walk much during the heat of the day, but now a cool breeze has sprung up it will be delightful upon the shore.

"I suppose it is too late in the day to take a boat?" ventures Myra, acting on the principle of losing nothing for want of asking for it.

"Yes, too late to-day," replies Captain Carew, "and the tide is coming in; but you shall have some boating before you leave us, I promise you."

Thus it happens that soon after this conversation Captain Carew, and his daughter, Sir Wilfred Marshall, and Myra, are walking along the parade going eastward in the direction of the promontory, locally named the "Parson and Clerk," which shelters Smuggler's Cove.

As the Captain truly said, the tide is coming in, so they cannot walk on the shore; but it is very pleasant here, the parade is fairly well crowded, and Myra, who has an eye for finery, and could always tell you to a nicety what anybody wears, finds herself as much interested in the toilettes of the ladies as in the restless sea.

At the beginning she and her host had walked together, followed at first and then preceded by Constance and the Baronet; but presently the former stops to speak to her father, while Myra and Sir Wilfred lead the way.

Those who know this part of Devonshire will remember that about midway between Teignmouth and Smuggler's Cove the railway sea-wall is considerably widened, a large square of solid masonry having been carried out into the sea as though it had been intended to build a fort here.

On this extension of the sea-wall stands a wooden hut, which may be a boat-house, and several handsome garden seats, upon which anyone is free to sit and rest, or read, as they are disposed.

There is no attempt at cultivation upon this patch of ground, but coarse grass grows here, and the boom of the waves from which the space has been wrested, is rarely silent as they break at its base.

They have just reached the beginning of this wider wall, when Myra turns suddenly and exclaims, in an unnecessarily loud tone of voice,—

"Miss Carew, see! there is your old admirer Mr. Balderson!"

"My old admirer!" repeats Constance, with grave displeasure. "I wish you would not make such remarks, Myra!"

"Very well, I won't; though it's true!" she says this last aside to Sir Wilfred; then adds,—

"I must speak to Mr. Balderson; he is a very old friend of ours!"

And the next instant she is advancing towards a young man whose appearance and costume proclaim him an artist, and who,

indifferent to, and unconscious of observers, is upon one of the seats, his paint-box in his hand, busily engaged in making a study of a particular bit of the scenery.

Her companions follow her. Constance as if drawn by some spell, the gentlemen from different motives—curiosity on the part of one, bitter and sudden jealousy on the part of the other.

"Your old admirer!"

Those were the words that stabbed Sir Wilfred to the heart, for he jumps to the hasty conclusion that it is because of this old admirer that Constance has treated him so strangely.

CHAPTER X.

A WORTHY RIVAL.

"Who is this Mr. Balderson?" asks Captain Carew, as he, with his daughter and Sir Wilfred Marshall, follows Myra.

"A very clever artist, who was a friend of the Misses Barlow!" replies Constance, calmly. "When I was leaving school, he told us he was going to the Land's End to sketch a particular rock, that he wanted for a picture, and I invited him to call and see us, and show you some of his sketches if he came to Teignmouth!"

"And you didn't know he was here?" questions her father.

"Certainly not!" is the answer, uttered in a tone which carries conviction with it.

Then she advances to shake hands with the artist, and introduce him to her companions.

Captain Carew is cordial and courteous; without being clever himself, he likes men of talent, and a glance at Eric Balderson's face convinces him that here is a man of no mean order of merit.

The face is not only a handsome one, it is flamed down with mental labour, with a never ending search for the noble and beautiful in nature; while the fire of genius burns in the young man's piercing eyes, and seems by its glowing intensity to be consuming the life within him.

Sir Wilfred Marshall's is a good face, open and fearless, and could belong only to an honourable man. Eric Balderson's is more than this. It is equally fearless, honourable and truthful; but the features are more clearly cut, indicating more extreme refinement, almost amounting to delicacy of character, though the face is saved from weakness by the intense individuality of the man, by the inspiration that marks everything he does as being different from the works of other men.

He has returned Myra's greeting quietly, but the fire in his eyes burns with a softer and a deeper glow as they rest upon the countenance of Constance Carew, and he takes her proffered hand almost in silence, and holds it in a firm grasp that might tell its own story if the love that fills his heart found one responsive echo in hers.

But it does not, nay, so mentally blind is she, that she does not perceive it.

Sir Wilfred detects it, but mingled with the feeling of jealousy it engenders is likewise a distinct sense of attraction towards this stranger, who is at any rate a worthy rival.

They all talk together for a few minutes, and, in answer to various questions, Mr. Balderson tells them that he arrived in Teignmouth last evening, that he is staying at the Mire Hotel, though he is rarely to be found there, and that the length of his stay here is uncertain, and will depend upon the subjects he gets for his brush, and letters he may receive from town.

Myra would carry him off with them at once if she could; but he is not the man to be one of a train for any lady's favour, and as they show signs of moving on, he resumes his brush; seeing which, Captain Carew says cordially,—

"Don't stand on ceremony, Mr. Balderson, but come and lunch with us to-morrow!"

"Thank you," replies the artist; "but I

have engaged a boat for to-morrow to take me round to Babbicombe—I want to make some sketches from the sea, but the following day I will call upon you, if I may."

"Do," is the reply.

And then the party of four go on their way while the artist resumes his seat and seems to continue his occupation.

"An exceedingly interesting man," remarks Sir Wilfred, who is now walking by our heroine's side.

"Yes, so I have always thought," she replies, frankly. "It isn't so much that what he does and says are so remarkably clever in themselves, but it is what you feel that he might accomplish with the reserve of talent and energy that he rather strives to hide than to parade."

"Yes; I should like to know more of him," says the Baronet, quietly.

And then there is silence between them, until Myra, who is walking in advance with the Captain, turns and makes the commonplace remark,—

"Mr. Balderson is looking awfully thin, isn't he, Miss Carew?"

"I didn't observe it," replies Constance, quietly.

On leaving the artist they had turned to retrace their steps homeward, and now, when they reach the road leading to Kilworthy House, Sir Wilfred says good-bye, declining the Captain's invitation to return with them.

"Don't forget your engagement for to-morrow," says the latter, and then they part, the Baronet remarking that he is quite sure not to do so.

Constance does not ask what the engagement is, and Myra, with all her audacity, dare not; so the three return home to dinner, and the Captain seems so thoroughly disinclined to go out again, that despite the messages requiring his presence at Mrs. Treleven's, he would not go there if a note from that lady were not brought to him soon after dinner—a note which he feels it impolitic to disregard.

So the two girls pass a quiet and uneventful evening, each provided with a novel; though Myra would like to go down by the pier and hear the band play, and see others and be seen herself, after the manner of visitors at a fashionable watering-place.

But, without speaking on the subject, she understands that this is out of the question to-night; and she soon begins to yawn, to plead fatigue, and before Captain Carew returns home, she has retired to her own room.

And yet, he is not late; but there is a flush upon his cheek and a light in his eyes which, to his daughter, are indicative of anger, and she knows at once that the visit has not been a pleasant one.

She asks no questions, however. She dreads this approaching marriage too much to make it a matter of conversation, and when her father says abruptly, "You needn't turn out of your room, Constance," she only replies, "Thank you, papa," and says nothing more.

Her father, however, is longing to be questioned; he wants to let off the steam generated by the angry words and bitter speeches to which he has been compelled to listen, and, seeing that he is not to be helped over the stile, he says in an explanatory tone,—

"Not that the matter between Mrs. Treleven and myself is ended, but it doesn't seem probable that it will come to anything just at present, and when it does, I won't have any of her family living with her. She is completely under their thumb, and there would be no comfort in the house from the day they entered it."

"You have been annoyed," says Constance, feeling that she must make some remark, yet desirous of avoiding any further expression of opinion concerning the widow and her family.

"Annoyed!" repeats her father, scornfully; "I have been insulted! outraged! There was old Treleven's brother thinking to sit upon me, to tell me my duty to his late brother's

children—like his infernal impudence! And there was that Kate—an impudent hussy—telling me I wanted to rob them, and that I only meant to marry her mother to enable me to do it legally. The only sensible person present was Leonard Catchbull; he saw my objection to settlements in a reasonable light, and then they all turned upon him, and abused him like a pickpocket. He walked to the gate with me, but I didn't ask him to come in, I felt too savage!"

"You will be better to-morrow, papa," says Constance, soothingly, and she kisses him and bids him good-night.

His words have removed one trouble from her mind, Mrs. Treleven's family will not come to Kilworthy House to reside; and she understands from her father's anger, that the advent of that lady herself is not a certainty.

In the troubles and anxieties that now surround her, this is one ray of brightness, and she goes to bed with a lighter heart than she has felt since she returned home, and sleeps peacefully, unconscious of the greater peril which only a few days will develop.

The following morning Captain Carew surprises his daughter with the remark that he is going to hand over the management of the housekeeping to her, followed by the request that she will give him her attention for an hour or more, while together they go through certain details.

He is a military man, methodical in all his habits, and the post of housekeeper in his establishment will be no sinecure.

"As you are going to be busy I'll take my book and go down on the shore," Myra remarks, casually. "Perhaps you will come down when you are disengaged, Miss Carew; and, if I don't see you before, I shall be back to luncheon."

"You cannot very well lose your way," replies Constance; "but I scarcely like the idea of your going alone."

"Oh, that is nonsense!" retorts the girl, lightly. "I am used to going about alone, and, as you truly say, I cannot very well get lost."

Then she puts on her sailor hat and her sand-shoes, and armed with a novel, she walks off to the beach, looking bright, pert, and saucy, ready for any mischief, and longing, as she really is, for some romantic adventure.

But romance, save in the pages of her novel, does not come in her way this morning.

Vainly she looks about for Sir Wilfred Marshall or James Treleven. Neither of them appear upon the lawn, parade, or sands. There are people bathing, it is true, and there are any number of children and nursemaids; and Myra Barlow, as she watches the youngsters, says to herself,—

"I wouldn't be a nurse or a governess for anything that could be given to me. The impudent, disobedient little wretches! Ah!"

This last exclamation is caused by the sight of a familiar face, and she rises to her feet, then sits down again, undecided whether to step forward and claim acquaintance with the individual in question, or to appear not to know her.

Little does she dream of the weighty issues to others rather than to herself that hang upon her decision, and it is at length solely from an ill-natured desire to triumph over one who has frequently scolded her, that she rises and walks over to a group of children, of varying ages, in the midst of which stands one of her aunt's former pupils, Edith Culver.

It will probably be remembered that Edith Culver was one of the three emancipated school-girls who had taken Myra Barlow with them on a shopping expedition as a sort of spy upon their movements the day before Constance Carew left Denborough House, Hampstead, for home.

"Good morning, Miss Culver!" says Myra, in her most condescending tone.

It was the custom at Denborough House for the Principal and her family to address the pupils as "Miss Carew" or "Miss So-and-so."

The girls might call each other by their



[NONE OF THE GROUP PERCEIVED MYRA, AND SHE APPROACHES THE PARTY AND LISTENS TO THEIR CONVERSATION.]

Christian names in private, but the rule of the school was to discourage anything of the kind, hence the formal manner in which Myra always speaks to Constance.

"Myra Barlow!" exclaims Edith Culver, not too graciously, "who would ever have expected to see you here?"

"Or you?" retorts Myra, in her most superior manner. "I am staying with friends," with an air of grandeur, which would scarcely be pardonable if she had said I am the guest of Her Majesty the Queen.

"And I am governess to five unmanageable and ill-bred children," says Edith Culver, bitterly.

"This is rather a pretty place," remarks Myra, with a condescending glance of approval to the right and to the left.

"Is it?" returns Edith, shortly. "I only arrived last evening. How long have you been here?"

"I also came yesterday," replies Myra, "but we took a long walk after tea, and who do you think we met?"

"How should I guess?" impatiently.

"Mr. Balderson," says Myra, delivering her shot point blank, and delighted to observe how the face before her becomes ashen pale, and quivers as though she had dealt a blow.

"What does he do here?" asks Edith, trying hard to command her voice to speak as usual.

"I don't know, unless he comes wooing to Constance Carew," is the careless answer.

"You said 'we' just now: who was with you when you met him?" asks Edith, with repressed eagerness.

"Sir Wilfred Marshall," replies Myra, lingering upon the name, so that her companion may fully realize that she is on friendly terms with a Baronet, "Captain Carew and his daughter."

"Ah! you are staying with the Carews, are you?" exclaims Edith, in a disdainful tone. "Constance always was absurdly good-

natured. Give my love to her, and tell her I shall come and see her the first time I can get an hour to myself. Ah! here comes Mrs. Rawlston's brother to tell me, I suppose, not to gossip but to look after the children."

Myra turns, sees Mr. Catchbull advancing towards them, and from no other motive than the contemptible one of showing off before poor Edith, she takes a step towards him, smiles, bows, and says, graciously,—

"Good-morning, Mr. Catchbull. Have you seen Miss Carew on that part of the promenade?"

The expression on the lawyer's face changes from one of overbearing insolence to oily deference.

Edith's surmise was quite correct; his sister had seen her governess, from her drawing-room window, talking to an acquaintance, and had asked her brother who was going away, to walk across the green with a message that was more imperative than courteous.

The name of Constance Carew, however, acts like a spell upon the man, he could not deliver an offensive message that might be repeated to her; and, recognising Myra, he shakes hands with her, and volunteers his escort to find Miss Carew.

This is rather more than Myra desires, and while she hesitates, Mr. Catchbull says, with an excess of politeness,—

"Miss Culver, my sister would be glad if you will take the children to her for a minute."

Edith bows, and turning away, says,—

"Good-bye, Myra; give my message to Constance."

"I will," is the reply.

Then, as a sudden thought strikes Myra, she says, in a slightly raised voice,—

"Miss Culver, I wish you'd lend me a book of yours that I've half read. I'm dying to know the end of the story, and I forgot to look."

"What is the book?" asks Edith.

"'The Mystery of the White Friar,'" is the reply.

"I gave it to Constance Carew to read on her journey home, she will lend it to you," is the reply.

Then the girls part, while an expression of mingled consternation and anticipated triumph comes over the lawyer's face. For "The Mystery of the White Friar," with the name "Constance" written upon the fly leaf, is identical with the book found in the railway carriage, in which a crime, still enveloped in mystery, had taken place, and the thought flashes through his unscrupulous brain, that, whether Constance has any knowledge of the tragedy or not, the fact that the book belonged to her will be a powerful weapon in his hands if the wooing, which he means to begin at once, does not otherwise prosper.

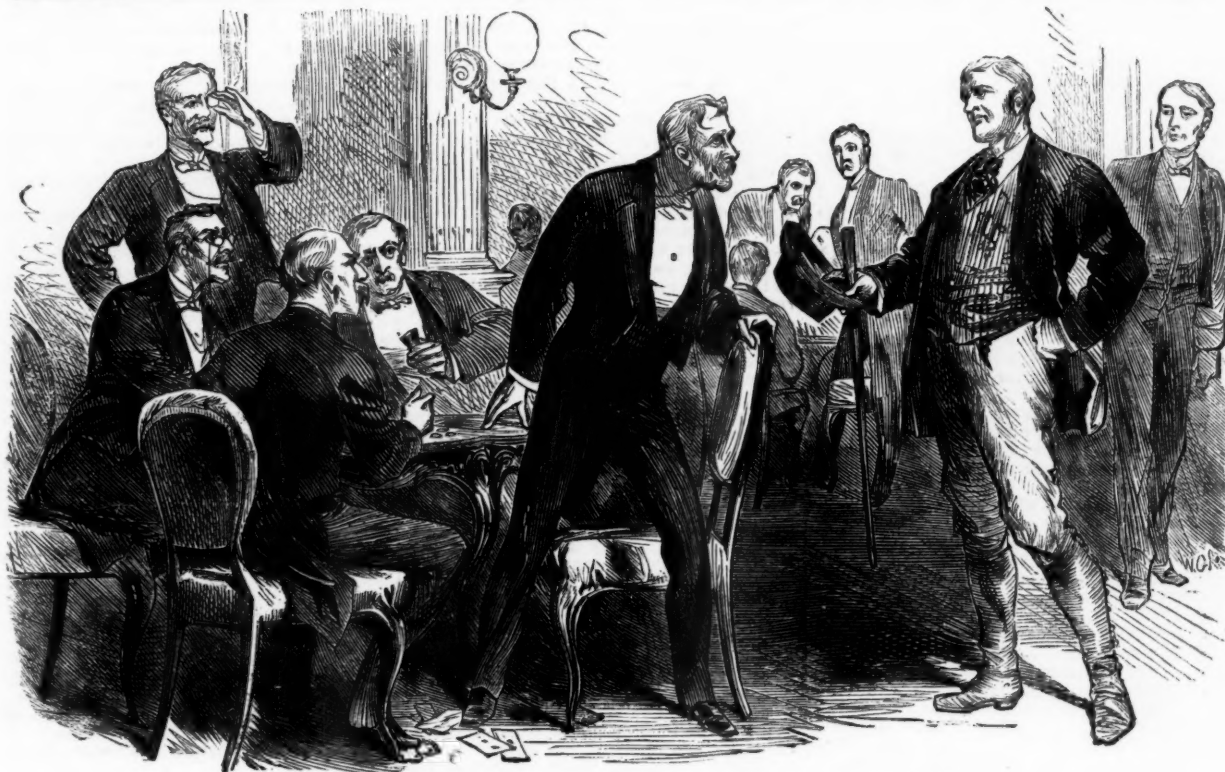
"I think I have heard of the book you mentioned just now," he remarks, as he walks along by Myra's side, "I wish you would let me look at it when you have it."

"I will," she replies.

And just then they see Constance Carew coming towards them.

(To be continued.)

A GREAT many people are annoyed by "cracking joints;" that is, the joints of their knees and ankles snap with a loud report on moving suddenly after remaining in one position for a short time. Sometimes the joints of the jaw are affected. The cause of snappy joints is generally a local cold, and the affliction is at first easily cured by exercise, warm baths and massage with oil. The tendons become stiff and slip over each other with difficulty, giving out the sharp sound already mentioned. They readily submit to treatment, and a little attention will speedily remove the annoyance.



[JOHN FOUND CAPTAIN JARDINE IN A GAMBLING HOUSE, WITH WILD, HAGGARD EYES.]

NOVELLETTE—concluded.]

FOR OLD LOVE'S SAKE.

CHAPTER V.

"I'LL SHELTER THEM."

THE accident to John Burton proved more serious than had been anticipated, and it was some weeks before he was able to resume his usual duties.

Mr. Jardine and his son, however, stood in the gap, and spent most of their time seeing to matters at Honour Oak Farm, feeling glad in this way to repay some of John's kindness to themselves.

Mrs. Jardine, too, was constantly there helping to nurse the sufferer, and assisting the invalid.

All this left Clare very much alone, for although she ran every morning over to see the man to whom she was pledged, to carry him a dainty buttonhole, arranged by her own fingers, she did it more as a matter of duty than anything else, and was glad to get it over, so as to set the rest of her day free. Every one of those flowers was treasured by honest John.

To say that he did not want her more with him would be untrue; but he thought it natural that so young and bright a girl should prefer the sunshine to the shadows; and illness always casts a gloom around it.

So he welcomed her warmly and lovingly; nor did he reproach or chide her that her visits were flying ones.

Mrs. Burton noted it with a sigh, but felt that words from her upon such a subject would carry far more pain than pleasure, so she was silent.

Sir Eric Du Val succeeded in getting apartments at a farm-house about three miles from Willowdene, and when Clare left her acknow-

ledged lover she flew to meet her clandestine one; while her mother thought her by poor John's bedside, and he pictured her safely at home with her mother.

There was a pretty little wood, where the ground wore a carpet of wild flowers, and was roofed with green leaves, beneath the shade and shelter of which was Clare's place of tryst with Sir Eric Du Val.

It was well out of the sight and sound of the outside world, and lay midway between Gorse Farm and Willowdene, so that it was easy for both lovers to meet.

On this particular occasion Sir Eric was there awaiting her arrival, and the moment their eyes met Clare knew she was found out.

"Clare," he said, gravely, "why have you deceived me all this time?"

"About what?" she queried, anxious to temporize.

"As if you do not know," he returned, with some impatience. "Is it true or not that you are engaged to the man you represented to me as your friend and neighbour?"

"It is true. Who told you?" she faltered.

"Your mother. So I know the news must be correct. Do you mean to marry him or no?"

Clare covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Eric!" she pleaded, "don't be cruel to me!"

"Cruel to you! that is good. Why have you deceived me? Tell me that!"

"Cannot you guess?" she panted. "Oh! my dear, surely you need not ask—"

His face softened, and he drew down her hands and held them in his own.

"Was it because you loved me, sweetheart, that you kept silence?"

"Yes. Cannot you understand that, Eric?"

A sad expression settled upon his features.

"Unfortunately, I can!"

"And you will forgive me?" and the blue

eyes were upturned to his, swimming in tears.

He stooped over her until their lips met.

"Place your arms about my neck, darling, and tell me you love me, Clare!"

"I love you with all my heart!"

"Poor wee child! Now kiss me fondly, lovingly."

She obeyed him, like the child she was.

"Clare, do you care for that great rough

farmer, John Burton?"

"He is not rough, Eric. He can be wonderfully gentle to me, and to his mother too."

"His mother! You are going to be her

nurse and keeper in fact."

"Oh, no! John would not ask such a

thing."

"He would—he will. Your mother told

me that Mrs. Burton will live with you."

"John has never mentioned such an idea."

"No, he takes it as a matter of course; and

this will be your loophole for freedom, if you

desire it."

"Eric, how can you say if? Oh, my dear!

I don't know how it came about. I never meant

to accept John. He took me by storm as it

were, and it was all settled before I knew

what I was doing, and then every one was so

happy and pleased that I thought I would try

and be pleased also; and poor John was very

kind, so it all went on satisfactorily till we

met dear, and since then—"

"And since then," repeated Sir Eric, re-

lentlessly.

"I have been very miserable, and very

happy too."

"And what are you going to do, child?"

She shivered.

"How can I tell? You will soon be going

away, Eric, and then I suppose you will forget

me, and I shall marry John."

"You shall not marry that clown!" he said,

passionately.

Her heart gave a great bound.

It was just what she wanted to hear him say.

She had not the faintest desire now to be poor John Burton's wife.

She clung to Sir Eric lovingly.

"Will you not forget me, dear?" she whispered.

He held her from him and looked deep down into her eyes with a strange sad look in his own.

"I would to Heaven I could, Clare; but I shall never forget you, dear. I took you straight into my heart the day we first met. I cannot pretend that I have never taken a fancy to any woman before; but, child, I have never loved as I love you. No, I shall never forget you. It would be better for us both if I could; but, sweet little witch, I have you with me always. For you I would do anything—anything! You are dearer to me than honour. I could die for you, child, ay, do it cheerfully."

There was a deep earnestness and passion in the man's words, carrying conviction with them. Clare believed him at once.

"Eric, if you love me so, I can never marry poor John."

"You never shall while I am above ground, my darling. Neither John Burton nor any other man shall call you wife."

"Shall I tell, papa?" she asked.

He remained for some time in thought.

"No, darling, not yet; be guided by me entirely. Let things go on as they are. I cannot at the present time ask openly for my little pet in marriage. Why, I cannot explain to you just now; but you can trust your old Eric, can you not, darling?"

"I will trust you, dear," she answered low.

"And do all I ask you?"

"Yes, all."

"Then let things go on as they are till my next long leave, when I hope to see clearly how to arrange things for our future."

"And shall I not hear from you for a whole year?"

"I am afraid not, sweet one. We must not risk letters, but I will return, never fear; and I shall daily and hourly think of you. If you receive any little anonymous gifts, my pet, you will know from whom they come. When it comes on the topic that Mrs. Burton is to live with you, you can slip out of the engagement with no real trouble. Let it all come about naturally."

"Very well, if you wish it to be so, Eric; but I would rather have ended it now, and let them all know of my love for you. My dear, is it not strange? You are just what I have pictured from childhood, as the man I wished to marry, and I feel so proud of you."

"Well, you must keep our secret from every one for the present, little love. Do you promise to do so?"

"Yes! I will do all you desire me."

"That is well. Trust yourself wholly to me, and we shall come into smooth water by and by. Do you remember what I said to you that first day we met? 'Trust to your father, and he will pull you through.'"

"Yes! I recollect," she answered, with a happy smile; "but, Eric dear, you speak as though there will be trouble before we come into harbour. Have you any sorrow which I know nothing of?"

"Did I say so, small imaginative one?"

"No, not in words, but your voice did."

"Well, you are right, Clare, I have a trial, but it concerns another person, and I cannot tell it even to you, so let us say no more about it. Some day it will pass away, then we will laugh over it together; but now I must be silent, and you must be content to trust me."

"I am content to trust you, Eric."

"That is my own dear good child. Look here, little one, I have a ring of my mother's, which I have worn upon my watch chain ever since her death. I value it more than anything else I have. Wear it round your neck until I can give you an engagement ring to take the place of that upon your finger," and he slipped his watch back into his pocket with

no chain whatever, and fastened it about her slender throat, placing it under her collar out of sight. "I would not give that to anyone in the world but you, Clare darling. Take care of it," he whispered; "I loved my mother dearly."

"It is only a loan, Eric," she returned, softly. "You shall have it back safely. I will take care of it for your dear sake."

"My dearest, do you know the time? You will scarcely be back to your lunch, and then questions will be asked which you will find it difficult to answer, so I must part with you now, darling; but I am to dine at Willowdene to-night, and we shall meet again to-morrow, so I must let you go now. I will walk to the entrance to the wood as usual, and there say *au revoir*."

Clare was late, and had to make the best of her way home; but she got in without special comment, and was in her place at table as usual.

Very pretty-looking Clare Jardine as she stood before her mirror, twining a spray of jasmine in her hair. Then she regarded herself attentively.

"There! you will do," she remarked to her reflection. "You will make a very pretty little Lady Du Val! Oh! how glad I am that Eric loves me! Fancy marrying poor old John, after knowing such a man as Eric. Why, I couldn't!"

"John is plain, and heavy, and unromantic, and Eric is—all my fancy painted him. He is altogether delightful. But I am sorry for poor old Jack; he will be cut up at first, no doubt. But the Vicar's adopted daughter, Rhoda Maylie, is over head and ears in love with him; he had better take his shattered heart to her to mend. She will be as willing as willing can be. Poor old John!" and as she spoke, she pinned another bunch of jasmine and a crimson rose upon the bosom of her soft white India muslin dress, which revealed, while it partly hid, the rounded arms and the white neck and shoulders.

The evening passed by pleasantly.

Sir Eric Du Val was really in love, and in all his actions he was trying to win the golden opinions of Clare and her relations.

He really had used his influence for Cecil Jardine, and it was settled at length that he was to go to Sandhurst at once, and started off with Sir Eric Du Val, who saw him settled there, and returned to say good-bye to Clare, clandestinely, for Mrs. Jardine and her husband believed him to be gone to join his regiment.

But he came back for one day, just to see Clare, and she had the painful pleasure of a final parting with the man she loved.

It was raining and blowing hard, but Sir Eric knew that his darling would be there.

She had much difficulty in getting out, but the old excuse of 'going to see John' was ready, and, after a flying peep at him, she was away through the deluge to the wood.

Her lover was waiting for her at the gate.

"I knew you would come, sweet-heart!" he murmured, as he clasped her in his arms.

"I do hope you will not take cold!"

"If I do, I shall have plenty of time to nurse up before I come to meet you again, dear!" she answered, smiling at him sadly.

"My pet, come here every quarter day at this hour, and if I can meet you I will; if not, you must understand that duty is too strong for me, and that I cannot get away, and knowing that, sweetheart, you must forgive me!"

"I will be here, Eric, and if you are absent I shall not misjudge you!"

"Good little Clare! Ah! how the wind drives through the trees. Let me shelter you from it!" and he hummed. "Oh! woe't thou in the cold blast!" in a soft mellow voice, which became marvellously tender as he repeated "I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee!" and he wrapped his overcoat around her and smiled down upon the sweet young face. Then his own grew grave. "What is it, Eric?" she asked.

"Nothing, dear heart. I was only thinking how I wish we had met five years ago!"

"Will it not do as well now?" she asked, smiling too.

In reply, he clasped his arms about her, passionately, and kissed her again and again. "Better late than never, little love. I could not spare you now. You are so very, very much to me!"

She clung to him with loving and tenacious arms.

"Oh! Eric, Eric! what shall I do without you?" she moaned.

"You shall not be without me, little love, one day longer than I can help it!" he whispered. "No one shall keep us asunder," he added, through his set teeth.

"Who should try?" she answered, low.

"Oh! Eric, you frighten me when you look like that!"

His face softened, and he drew her closer and closer, and they stood lip to lip, and heart to heart, and the wind howled dismally around them like a dirge, and shrieked in the tree-like branches overhead, with the voice of human pain.

"Eric, I am so dreadfully afraid!" she said.

He clasped her even more closely, and once more sang to her. "I'll shelter thee, I'll shelter thee!" and so they waited, dreading to part.

CHAPTER VI.

"TRY AND WIN HIM BACK," WHISPURED JOHN.

CLARE lived upon these stolen meetings with Sir Eric, Du Val.

On those days she lived, and through all the rest she existed.

Each month brought its changes to Willowdene.

News came from Sandhurst from Cecil, who was doing well.

An invitation arrived for Captain, or as we have hitherto usually called him, Mr. Jardine, to visit Sir Eric at Aldershot, and, much against his wife's wishes, he decided to accept it, for his son's sake, he said; but the real truth of the case was that having had the Baronet for a companion had made him discontented with the quiet life which he had led for some years. His nature was weak and pleasure-loving, and when the pleasure came his way, he had not the strength of mind to resist it.

Clare was only too pleased that he should go, and thought her mother's reluctance that he should do so, selfish, nor could she understand the look of sadness upon her face as he drove off to the station. Afterwards she comprehended that Mrs. Jardine knew her husband's nature better than she understood that of her father.

Nor was that the only visit to Aldershot. Captain Jardine spent a great deal of his time with the 223rd Eastlows, who were a decidedly fast set from the Colonel down to the junior subaltern, fond of racing, card-playing, and mischief of all sorts.

Very jolly, pleasant fascinating fellows were many of them, with plenty of money in their pockets to squander at their wicked will.

Intimate acquaintance with them soon began to bear fruit.

Captain Jardine became a dandy once more. The clothes which answered excellently at Willowdene would not do at all at Aldershot, and Sir Eric took him to town to his own tailor, and became answerable for whatever he chose to order. Little by little he fell into Sir Eric's card-playing ways; and went with him to various races.

At first he had no idea whatever of betting, but finding the Baronet's purse open to him, he soon lost pride and borrowed from him largely.

His luck was seldom good, and in the evenings he felt the pangs of remorse, which he tried to drown in the wine-cup.

When he was at Willowdene, the Captain was longing to be back with the lively spirits

of the 223rd Regiment, and could not settle down either to his work, or in his home.

But for John Burton, Willowdene farm must have gone to rack and ruin.

He looked on with wonder at the change in his friend, but he felt that it was not possible for him to take an older man than himself to task; so he just did what he could for him, working the farm with his own, and giving Mrs. Jardine money from the proceeds when her husband was not there to possess himself of it and squander it.

Moreover, John paid all Cecil's expenses at Sandhurst, and all his uniforms were purchased by him when he entered the army; and the interest of Sir Eric succeeded in getting him posted to his own regiment.

Captain Jardine and Cecil were never tired of singing the Baronet's praises, declaring him to be a splendid fellow all round, and Clare most thoroughly agreed with them.

John Burton and Mrs. Jardine only looked grave, and were afraid of the influence of this delightful man.

As for Clare she absolutely worshipped Sir Eric Du Val, and obeyed his wishes implicitly.

More than once honest John Burton spoke of their coming marriage, but Clare too evidently shrank from the idea for him to press it.

She was very gentle to him however. The love within her heart—albeit it was for another man—softened her and made her so. And he, pleased by her kindness, troubled not to question why it was, so long as she was kind. Even Mrs. Barton smiled now hopefully, and stroked the golden head with a more loving hand.

"John, dear," she said to him with a smile, "your sweetheart has greatly improved."

"Ay, mother," he replied, "if there ever was room for improvement—Clare was always perfect in my eyes—but perhaps the fruit is riper and more mellow. I count myself a lucky man to have gained such a prize."

Poor John Burton! he little knew of the stolen meetings in the wood, or of the wild love in the heart of Clare for another man.

As for Clare, she grew really fond of honest John.

He soothed her as no one else could do. In her feverish sorrow at the loss of Sir Eric for weeks together, John was her greatest comfort. So long as he did not speak too much of his love, or at all of their approaching marriage, she was happier with him than with any one.

She felt deep down in her heart how good and true he was; and his kindness to her seemed like a cool hand laid upon a hot brow, and the most peaceful hours she knew were those she enjoyed driving about the country alone with him.

The Vicar of the village of Honour Oak was an old man and a poor one. In fact, the living was scarcely worth the having, and that was probably why it was given to Mr. Gregson.

Some years before he had adopted a little girl, the orphan child of an old college friend, who had been left alone in the world in consequence of the death of her parents, and Mr. Gregson, at his dying friend's wish, had become a father to his little girl.

Mr. Gregson had the most profound admiration for John Burton, whose purse was always open for him to dip into for the sick and suffering of his flock, and little Rhoda Maybe, entirely shared the opinions of her adopted father.

To Rhoda Maybe John Burton was a god among men, and a sorrow which she did not understand contracted her heart when she saw him so often with Clare Jardine, and heard their engagement spoken of.

The sharp eyes of Clare soon detected the girl's secret.

The half shy glance and changing colour told her all there was in the untutored heart, and Clare used to weave a romance, namely, that when she was gone, Rhoda would comfort John Burton, and after a time become mistress of Honour Oak Farm.

She did not think that John's faithful heart would change all at once, but she hoped that little by little it would turn to Rhoda Maybe. Months rolled into years, all the changes going on and deepening.

Cecil Jardine seldom came to Willowdene, which by the light of his new gay life he called "too slow," and "dead as ditch water," but Clare had the great delight of attending a military ball.

Mrs. Jardine positively declined to go, so Clare went with her father, to the decided annoyance of John Burton, who felt that it would unsettle his darling in her quiet life.

He went to Willowdene to invite Mrs. Jardine over to dine with his mother and himself, and he walked back with her in the evening.

On their way the poor woman opened her heart to him.

"John," she said, "I have always felt that you are a son to me."

"Well, he replied, cheerfully, "that is only anticipating a little, is it not mother? and the sooner it is a reality the better pleased I shall be; but Clare seems in no hurry."

"That is just it. My whole family seem pleasure mad."

"It is only natural after all in Clare that she should like a peep into the gay world," answered John, in defence of the girl he loved.

"John," cried Mrs. Jardine, "if she sees too much of the gay world she will never settle down at Willowdene or at Honour Oak Farm either. If you want her for your wife make a stand when she returns, and insist upon an early marriage."

"If I want her for my wife!" he returned, quite indignantly. "Mrs. Jardine, dear, surely you forget that Clare and I have already plighted our faith to one another. I will ask her to name an early day, but I would not press her into haste if she wishes to wait, any more than I could dream that she could break her word to me. Dear little Clare, I only wish she would come home that I might make her entirely happy!"

Mrs. Jardine sighed.

"I wish, John, I had your childlike faith and trust. I confess I am afraid, and scent coming trouble for us each and all."

"Indeed, I hope not," he answered, gravely.

"But for you," she continued, "where would our home be now? So far you have saved Willowdene, but I fear for its master, John. You must see how the love of pleasure has changed Frank."

He pressed the hand upon his arm.

"Yes, I have noticed it. Speak to him, mother. He loves you, and will give up the world, as he did before, for your sake."

"I will try," she answered; "but, John, I am out of heart, and that's the truth."

"Don't lose heart," he whispered, "ask him to do it for your old love's sake, which used to be so very much to him."

"Ay, that is true; I will try, I will do my best. I have been vexed with him of late, and perhaps I have shown it, and been less affectionate."

"Try and be your old self, and win him back," whispered John.

"If it be not too late," replied she, sadly.

"It can never be too late to mend, while life lasts," said he, earnestly. "I think there is no sin against me I could not forgive, if only I knew that I was still beloved; and your husband loves you."

"I hope so, John. I have not yet come to doubting that."

"Never doubt it if you value your peace," whispered he. "Cheer up, dear Mrs. Jardine, we shall all be sitting in the sunshine soon, with these dark clouds rolled by, and you and I will be smiling into each other's faces as we remember our walk home to-night, and the sad thoughts which tried so hard to dim our happiness."

They were standing then under the porch of Willowdene, and John's hand was upon the bell pull.

"I won't ask you in to-night, John; it is late, and I want to think," she murmured.

They pressed hands, and the stars blinked overhead. The door opened, and Mrs. Jardine passed in.

"Good-night," she said.

"Good-night," he echoed.

Then the door closed, and he stood out in the night alone.

CHAPTER VII.

"A BROKEN ENGAGEMENT."

CECIL JARDINE brought his sister home.

"His father was staying on with Sir Eric Du Val," he explained, "and might not be back for some little time."

Having her son with her seemed to cheer Mrs. Jardine up, although Cecil was not at all what he had been.

But he had vastly improved in appearance and manners, which made the mother's heart proud; although there was none of the old love of home which had characterised the boy in his youth.

He was delighted with his own position in the world, and his love of the army was genuine.

"It was awfully good of old John to have stood in the gap in that affair," he said to his mother, "although, had he not done so, Sir Eric would have seen me through."

"You are lucky to have such friends," returned Mrs. Jardine; "but, of course, you could not have accepted such a favour at the hands of a stranger. Your sister being engaged to John, made a family matter of it."

"Yes! and his kindness to me only prevents my persuading Clare to break through such an engagement."

"I am glad something prevents you, Cecil," returned Mrs. Jardine, dryly. "Why should not Clare keep her word to John? She will never get a kinder husband."

"Simply because he is not our class," said Cecil. "He is good enough, but Clare is a great beauty, and could do far better for herself. You should have seen the attention she received at our ball. The fellows all told me I ought to be very proud of such a sister; even Du Val admires her. And she is wonderfully pretty—a regular Jardine. We met a lot of our swell cousins at the ball too, and they said so also. The fact is, Clare is not in the least fitted for a farmer's wife; she is worthy of a different fate."

"She should have thought of that before. If John was good enough when she accepted him, he is good enough now. He has in no wise deteriorated."

"Well! I admit I couldn't ask such a brother-in-law to our mess. The fellows would think I have got hold of a country cousin! Still I like John on his own acres, and I have no doubt he will always be ready to help a lame dog over the stile. I'll do him that justice."

"You cannot do him too much justice!" answered his mother; "but I hope, my boy, there will be no lame dogs to assist. You have chosen your profession, knowing yourself to be a poor man, and you must learn to say 'no' to expenses which you cannot afford."

The young man whistled thoughtfully, and passed his hand with a caressing gesture over his monstache.

"Ah! yes, mother, that is all very well, but theory and practice are two very different matters. A man may say he will live on his pay, but he can't do it in a regiment like ours, and I doubt if he can at all. So far, Du Val has been a regular brick, and has put me up to a lot of 'tips' for making money; and when I have burnt my fingers he has paid up without a word, for me. In fact he has taken me under his wing."

"But, Cecil, you don't accept money from Sir Eric Du Val?"

"Why not? He has plenty of it, and I have very little."

Mrs. Jardine turned pale.

"And your father?" she asked.
 "He's enjoying himself immensely. He has gone to the races to-day with some of his relations, who appear to have forgiven him, and then he returns to Aldershot."

"Ceil, I hope your father does not bet on these races?" she said, anxiously.

"Can't say; I never asked him. You would hardly know our quiet farmer pater, for the 'awful dad' he is away from home, and among men of his own position. Why shouldn't he have a 'pony' on the race if he likes, mother?"

"Simply because he can't afford it."

"We should not do much if we only did what we can afford," he laughed; "but there is a good old saying, 'Nothing venture, nothing have!' I believe in striking out boldly; a feeble swimmer never gets on, you know."

Mrs. Jardine shook her head.

"Who has been teaching you such doctrines, my dear boy? I fear they will bring you into trouble. It is all very well to quote old sayings; I could do the same. 'Lightly come, lightly go,' is one of them. I prefer to see a man 'slow and sure.'"

"Like John Burton, eh?" laughed Cecil.

"Yes, like John. He is every inch a man. I consider him a very fine character."

"Oh! no doubt," replied the young soldier, with a stifled yawn, "but you must admit he is heavy on hand."

"I admit nothing to his detriment."

"Mother, I shall tell the pater he has cause to be jealous of John Burton," laughed the other.

"And he will believe you," returned she, laughing too; but although she laughed, her heart was very sad.

Cecil returned to Aldershot the same afternoon, calling in to ask John for the loan of fifty pounds on his way to the station.

That good fellow gave him what he asked for without a question, and as he placed the cheque in his breast pocket, he laughingly remarked upon the admiration Clare had excited at Aldershot.

"You ought to be very proud of such a prize," he said. "I can tell you the fellows were 'palling caps' for her, and she could have filled her programme with partners half a dozen times over."

"I don't wonder at that, but I am glad she is home again," answered John, quietly, "and I shall be still more so when she decides to come to Honour Oak Farm for good."

"Of course you will John, and now I must be off, or I shall lose my train."

"Is your father home, Cecil?"

"No, he has gone to some races. He has some rather heavy bets on, but don't tell the mater. Ta, ta!" and thoughtless light-hearted Cecil Jardine was up in his father's dog-cart, and on his way to the station.

John Burton looked after him with a thoughtful face.

"I meant to do right, but I fear it will turn out wrong. Mrs. Jardine never wished him to enter the army, but Clare desired it, and the boy's heart was set on it, and his father was glad. I don't know that I can blame myself exactly; but I wish the old life had never been interrupted. Well! I must go round and see how my dear girl is after all her dissipation, and taking his hat from its accustomed place in the hall, he strolled across the fields; and meeting Mrs. Jardine at the Hall door, she told him that he would find Clare in the drawing-room arranging some flowers, and bade him enter by the French window.

He stepped off the soft lawn into the room unheeded, and Clare was before him. She was looking at his likeness, and two large tear-drops had fallen from her blue eyes upon it. His heart bounded with a sudden great joy.

"My beautiful!" he cried, "what is it?" and in another moment his arms were about her. "What! weeping, my pretty one? Tell

your old Jack your trouble," and he drew her head upon his shoulder.

"I have no trouble, Jack. I am happy, very happy, but I feel nervous to-day and low-spirited. It is the fatal effects of too much enjoyment I suppose; but oh! I wouldn't have missed the ball for anything. You cannot think how beautiful it all was. The rooms were decorated with real living soldiers standing as still as waxworks, in full uniform, and the walls were glittering with swords and bayonets in such fine devices, and hung with flags, and the colours of the regiment, which had been through so many wars, and were tattered, torn and blood-stained; and then the evergreens, and ferns, and flowers, and the band! Oh! Jack, it was all so heart stirring, and so different to dead-and-alive old 'Willowdene.' I felt like Cinderella coming back here, I assure you."

John Burton looked very grave. He took her hand and led her to the sofa, and held it.

"My pet!" he said. "I think a quiet home-life is better and holier than the turmoil of the gay world, and I hope you will stay at home with your own old John in the future. Lassie, darling, I think I have been patient, but mother and I want you at Honour Oak Farm very much, and I hope my dear girl will consent to be my wife now very soon. I have wished to say this to you so very often, Clare dear, and now it is said. Fix our wedding-day, like a good little love!"

Clare Jardine was very pale. She loved Sir Eric Du Val, but giving John Burton pain was no longer a pastime to her.

"Your mother and you want me," she repeated, slowly. "No, John, I don't believe in living with a mother-in-law."

"You must be joking, Clare! You would not wish me to send my mother away. Why, dear girl, the home is more hers than mine. Impossible! I could not ask her to leave it!"

"As you please, John."

"What does that mean, Clare?"

"That I can't marry you—that is all!"

He rose and paced the room with conflicting emotions.

"I never expected this," he said at length, stopping before her. "Clare, surely you do not mean it?"

She rose and stood before him, her face very pale, and her hands clasped convulsively together.

"Yes, I do! I am not fit for you, John. I could never nurse an invalid for the rest of my days!"

"The rest of her days you mean, lassie," he said, brokenly; "it would not be for long, more's the pity, for I love my mother dearly."

"If she is more to you than I am, John, let it be so!" she answered, with a touch of temper; for although she had no thought of wedding him now, she would have liked to know that he would have given up all for her sake.

"Clare," he said, with suppressed passion, "how can you say such things? My love for you would in no wise interfere with my affection for my mother. The two feelings are separate and apart."

"John," said the girl. "Rhoda Maylie loves you. She would make an excellent nurse for Mrs. Burton, and would be grateful for a home. Think of my words when I am far away, and know that I would have wished to see her your wife," and Clare Jardine slipped from the room like a ghost.

CHAPTER VIII.

GOING AWAY.

JOHN BURTON remained staring at the door like a man stunned. After a while Mrs. Jardine passed, and saw him. She entered the room and laid her hand kindly upon his shoulder.

"John, what is it?" she asked, simply.

"I hardly know," he answered in a voice

all unlike his own. "I suppose I did something wrong. Anyway it is all over now."

"What is all over?" inquired Clare's mother nervously.

"Our engagement. Clare has given me up."

"Why?"

"Heaven knows!"

"She must have assigned some reason."

"She was annoyed because I told her that mother and I wanted her home."

"I suppose she thought you hurried her?"

"No, it was not that. She said she would not live with a mother-in-law."

"John, you must have been mistaken."

"No, I was not! In some cases I should have said she had the right to choose, but no woman with a heart could ask a son to turn such a mother as mine out of doors, helpless as she is too."

"And you refused?"

"I did."

"John, I respect you. You acted rightly. Clare must have had a wilful fit on. She will be sorry before long. Let her alone, let her think you accept her decision; she will soon want you back. Why, after all these years, surely, she could not do without you!"

"So I had hoped, mother!"

"That is right, call me mother still. I hope this vexation will soon pass. Clare was made too much of by the red-coats, and does not yet understand that ball-room adoration is a most ephemeral thing, and passes away with the glare and glitter of the pleasant evening. Don't lose heart, John. I shall not pretend to know that anything is wrong between you. I prophesy it will come right in a few days!"

"Mrs. Jardine," said he, very earnestly, "if I lose, Clare, I hope you will not blame me, or let it make any difference in our friendship. I would die for your daughter's happiness, but I cannot sacrifice my mother. She must never know of this. It would break her heart!"

"You have been too good a friend to me and mine, John, for me ever to care for you less under any circumstances; but I still hope Clare will regret her hasty words. You are right, Mrs. Burton must never be told of her folly!" and she held out both her hands to John Burton, which he clasped silently, and then passed out of the window, through which he had entered with so glad a heart; but then the joy had all died out, and the light had left his eyes. He looked many years older than when Mrs. Jardine had seen him only a few minutes before.

She had expressed a hope that Clare had not really meant what she had said; but John had no such hope.

He walked quietly home with bent head, looking like a man who had heard of the death of a dear one, whereas he had only heard of the death of his long cherished hopes, and he found that quite enough to hear. Still he was not the man to speak one word against the woman he loved.

He walked into the room which he always made bright and pretty for his mother, and kissed her, a little more tenderly perhaps than usual.

"John," she said, anxiously, "are you ill?"

He laid his hand in hers, reassuringly.

"Not a bit of it, mother, a little lazy this afternoon, perhaps, so I have come to bear you company!"

"My boy, that is not all," she said, sadly. "Is it Clare?"

When her name was mentioned John Burton's composure gave way—he walked to the window and looked out; and Mrs. Burton knew that something was wrong which her son did not mean to tell, and with a wisdom seldom displayed she said no more, expressing her sympathy by hand and eye only, until he went out to see to farming matters, then hot tears of sorrow dimmed the faded eyes.

"Clare has vexed my boy!" she murmured, "I feared it would be so some day. She is so very wilful!"

How much more bitter would have been

her tears had she dreamed that Clare had made her the excuse for gaining her freedom.

Clare Jardine was up in her own room until tea time, with her door locked.

Mrs. Jardine had decided to let her alone, and to say nothing to her daughter whatever, being well aware that opposition strengthens some natures in evil.

The girl entered the dining-room with erect head and defiant eyes, ready to do battle; but her mother took no notice of what had happened, and, little by little Clare became more like her usual self. Still there was a restlessness about her; she sang a snatch of a song when tea was over, and broke off in the middle; she drank her tea feverishly, but not one mouthful could Mrs. Jardine persuade her to eat.

She essayed to read a novel, but her mother saw that the book was upside down.

She talked at intervals, as one who speak at random, and seemed unaware of her own mistakes.

Supper was very much like tea.

Clare ate but little, and as soon as the meal was over Mrs. Jardine suggested retiring to bed.

The girl lingered for some time in the passage, holding her mother's hand, and kissed her many times, which was not her custom, and Mrs. Jardine, thinking that she was inclined to tell her about her having broken her engagement with John, rather hurried away, considering that the least said the soonest mended, and hoping within a few hours she would make it up again with him.

Once in her room the girl sat down and had a good cry.

She was going away, and her home seemed dearer to her than it had ever done before.

The remembrance of John Burton's sad face was plain before her mental vision.

All his goodness for so many years rose up and arrayed itself before her.

She knew how deeply he loved her, and how he would suffer, how he was even then suffering.

Girls are too apt to rejoice over conquests, but, if they have hearts themselves, the day will come when each pain inflicted by them rebounds upon themselves, and causes keen sorrow to their own breast.

Clare was a decidedly thoughtless girl; but that night she could not shut out the sufferings of honest John Burton.

The clock upon her mantel piece struck, and startled her from her reverie.

She drew the chain from its hiding place and caressed it with her soft fingers as she had so often done before, opened a lock and gazed long at the handsome face of Sir Eric Du Val, and gradually her sadness cleared away, and a smile dimpled her round cheek.

She rose and took a black leather "Gladstone" bag from a shelf and packed a few of her personal treasures, then sat looking at John's engagement ring which was still upon her finger.

"It must come off," she whispered to herself, "but I can't return it to the giver. That would pain him worst of all to give him back his gift." So she hid it beneath the wool of one of her trinket boxes, and placed it in her bag.

Then she dressed in the handsomest costume she possessed, and made her way silently down the stairs and out of the same French window through which John Burton had made his sorrowful exit, with her bag in her hand.

All pain seemed to have left her heart. It beat with an exultant throb, just tinged with nervousness, for she started more than once as the night breeze sighed among the trees, and caught at her breath.

At a certain point she paused and listened. A mellow voice was breaking the stillness which reigned before, "I'll shelter thee—I'll shelter thee;" and in another moment the arms of Sir Eric Du Val were about her, and in low, soft tones he was promising to love her through time and eternity, and to shield her against all the world.

CHAPTER IX.

TROUBLE.

MRS. JARDINE arose at her usual hour the next morning, and descended to the breakfast-room. The urn was soon hissing and spluttering upon the table, sounding homely and comfortable; but Clare had not made her appearance, so the mother sent the servant up to call her. The girl returned breathless.

"Miss Clare is not there, ma'am!"

"Not there! What do you mean?"

"I can't tell. I'm afraid it's something dreadful. Her room is all in confusion, and her bed has not been slept in, and now I come to think of it, the drawing-room window was not fastened this morning."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Jardine, firmly, but she turned pale nevertheless. "Miss Clare has made her bed herself and gone out for a walk. Bring the bacon. I'll have breakfast."

The mother tried not to believe that anything could possibly be wrong.

She did her best to force her breakfast down, but with no satisfactory result; and as soon as she could do so without observation, she crept quietly up the stairs to Clare's room, and, closing the door behind her, she surveyed it minutely.

There was not one word left behind, but there were evident signs of a hasty departure.

The drawers were all left open, and the clothes were scattered about.

The Gladstone bag was missing, and her two best dresses from the wardrobe, and all her toilet requisites.

Yes! Clare was gone—but where?

Mrs. Jardine's legs shook under her, and she sank into the nearest chair, covering her face with her hands.

She never knew how long she remained there—her mind was absolutely chaotic. A footstep on the stairs aroused her at length. It was her servant looking for her; but when Mrs. Jardine untasted the door, the sight of her white face silenced even her voluble tongue.

The mistress told her to go for Mr. Burton, but not to mention Clare's name to anyone, and the girl promised.

She saw him directing his men in the fields and went to him.

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Jardine wants you to come at once!" she said, regarding him with a look of intelligence.

He dropped his spade upon the ground, and followed her without question, although a dozen arose in his mind, and she had her work out to keep pace with him.

She opened the door of Willowdene, and he passed straight into the morning room. Mrs. Jardine rose to meet him with outstretched hands.

"John, John, what shall I do? She is gone!" Her voice became a wail as she spoke, and her eyes were heavy with tears.

There was no need to ask to whom she referred.

"By Heaven!" he replied, with blanched cheeks. "What drove her to that? Mother, did you blame her for what I told you?"

"No, I never spoke to her."

"Is there another man?" he asked, hoarsely, as he grasped a chair back for support.

"John, I do not know," replied Clare's mother, solemnly. "We must not lose time. What am I to do?"

"No, we must not lose time. Have you no idea where she has gone?"

"None!"

"We must send for her father. He has the best right to know. A telegram would make the affair public. I had better go to him, if you can do without me. Will you drive me to the station? I shall just catch the up train."

Neither of them thought of the need to change his farming clothes. Clare filled the mind of both, and the London express carried John Burton with it.

When he reached Aldershot he could find no one. Clare's father and brother were absent, but, after hours of waiting, Captain Sir Eric Du Val came to him to Cecil Jardine's room, and gave him an address in London where, he said, he would find Captain Jardine, and poor John Burton went on again.

He did find Captain Jardine at midnight, in a gambling house, with wild, haggard eyes, who refused to leave it; but John would take no denial, and leading him aside, whispered in his ear.

Captain Jardine staggered.

"Gone!" he repeated. "When, and where?"

"Last night—Heaven only knows where. Your wife is broken hearted. Come to her," and he led him unresistingly away. Clare's father seemed to be in a dream. He had left his last coins on the table at the gambling house, and he uttered no words. He seemed crushed beneath the weight of his great misery. John travelled with him through the night, and they arrived at Willowdene in a station fly early in the morning. Poor Mrs. Jardine was shocked at the change in her husband, and feared for his mind.

He appeared unable to grasp the meaning of the disappearance of his daughter, and his eyes were vacant and wandering. There seemed nothing they could do. Mrs. Jardine wrote a full account of their troubles to her son, asking if he could throw any light upon the disappearance of his sister, while John Burton wandered from station to station, making inquiries but finding out nothing, only to return home to fresh trouble.

Whether his mother had been told by any one of the disappearance of Clare, he never knew, but upon going into her room he found she had had a stroke and was speechless.

He loved her with a son's most true devotion, and this extra sorrow weighed down his whole soul.

Everything was done for her that could be done; but the doctor, who had attended her for so many years, shook his head, for he knew that that gentle voice would be heard no more, although his patient might yet be spared some time, for her tongue was paralyzed.

In the meantime trouble had flooded Willowdene.

Some time before, Captain Jardine had given a bill of sale upon his house and furniture, to get money to pay his debts of honour, besides the large sums he had borrowed from Sir Eric Du Val.

Mrs. Jardine saw that her husband was too much broken down in mind and body to give him one reproach. Then there came to Willowdene some men to take possession of it.

Captain Jardine saw them, and after a few minutes of conversation he walked blindly upstairs, and looked himself into his room.

His wife tried the door many times, and at length grew nervous.

She could not understand either the presence of the strangers in the house, and her heart was heavy within her.

She hesitated to trouble poor John Burton in the midst of his own great sorrow, but made up her mind to run herself over to Honour Oak Farm.

John received her with his usual kindness and affection, but looked very grave when he heard the story of the strange men in the house, and the locked door.

His heart sunk within him; a great dread took possession of his mind.

"Stay with my mother for me," he answered, low, "while I go and see to things. I need not remind you, dear, that she can hear, although she cannot speak, and so I know you will not let any word fall which might distress her. We shall not have her long, but while we have, I should like her to have no sorrow;" and pressing Mrs. Jardine's hand he led her to his mother's room.

"Mother dear, here is a kind friend come to sit with you," he said. "No, it is not Miss

Maylie, although it is about her time to come. It is Mrs. Jardine."

The feeble hand was outstretched, and John slipped away, running all the way to Willowdene.

At the door he stopped—a sickly fear of entering seeming to overpower him, but he pulled himself together and went in.

He soon learnt the story of the bill of sale, and going up the stairs he knocked repeatedly upon Mr. Jardine's door; but receiving no answer, he broke it open.

The unhappy man sat beside a table, upon which his arms were resting, and his head was drooped upon them.

There was something in the attitude which suggested sleep, but, sad to say, it was the last sleep of death.

Frank Jardine had been going the pace too fast altogether, and had come to utter grief. Knowing this he had not the manhood to face the terrible position and begin again—a beggar.

Who can tell what agony of soul drove him on to the fatal act he had committed? Upon the table was an empty chlorodyne bottle, and Frank Jardine was dead.

Even the rough men below-stairs were shocked and awed by the dread shadow which had so silently stepped in among them. And Cecil Jardine, arriving in answer to his mother's distressing letter, was distracted with grief.

Trouble was so new to him and so hard to bear, that poor John Burton's hands were full.

When he could persuade him to rest quietly for a little time, he hastened over to the Vicarage, and asked the Vicar and gentle Rhoda Maylie to go over and take charge of the headstrong youth, while he went to break the fatal news to the poor widow.

Rhoda and her adopted father went at once, and got Cecil to return to the Vicarage with them—the girl's sympathy and kindness soothing his excitement wonderfully.

To her he told his fears for his sister Clare, and her answer came like a cool hand upon his heated brow.

"Why should you fear for Clare?" she asked, out of the innocence of her own white heart. "She has been brought up by a good mother, and will not forget the lessons taught by her. Clare may have acted foolishly, but she cannot have done wrong."

"I will believe as you believe, Rhoda," answered Cecil, warmly. "You comfort me about my sister, but my father—"

He left off with a broken voice.

"Your father may not have intended to take so much. Chlorodyne is very soothing, you know, and he may scarcely have known in his troubles what he was about, and so the accident may have occurred."

"You are a dear good girl, Miss Maybe. Now tell me what I ought to do. I cannot remain on in the expensive regiment I am in. I am in debt already, and with this family history I could not return among my brother officers."

"No, do not do so. They have, I think, led both you and your father astray. Exchange regiments and go to India. Tell John Burton about your debts, he will help you, he is so very good."

"He is. He has helped me much already. I will tell him all."

This young girl's sensible advice sunk into Cecil's heart.

He looked at the sweet face, which, although not beautiful, had a beauty all its own—the beauty of goodness—and a determination entered his mind to try and win her for his wife in the far off future.

He was not so wrong-headed as to intend to bind her to him with any promise, but he thought Rhoda would be like a bright star on a dark night in his sky to guide him to a better life.

On his way back to Honour Oak Farm, John went to the village nurse, and bade her go to Willowdene, and he also sent the doctor, although he knew that his services

were no longer of any avail, begging him to undertake to give due notice for the necessary inquest.

Then he returned to his home with slow footsteps and a heavy heart.

The task before him was a most painful one, and he hardly felt fit to go through with it.

Coming out of the sunshine of happiness and satisfied love into the sudden desolation, was almost too much for even the brave spirit of honest John Burton.

Mrs. Jardine saw him pass the window.

Mrs. Burton was asleep, and she slipped from the room.

He walked into his comfortable dining-room, and opened his arms for her.

"Mother," he said, brokenly. "You were to have been my mother, you know, and it is neither your fault nor mine that it is not to be, but I shall ever love you just the same. Think of me as your son, dear. I promise before Heaven that I will be one to you. Mother, from now your home will be with me; and in the days that are coming I shall thank Heaven for giving me another mother, for I shall not have mine with me long."

There was a look of pathetic terror in Mrs. Jardine's eyes.

"My home here! Oh! John, what do you mean?"

"Mother, how can I tell you?"

She closed the door.

"John, John, has anything awful happened?" and she held him so tightly that it bruised his flesh.

"Do not ask, my dear, I cannot tell you—not now, not now. Mother, neither you nor I can bear much more—to-day."

"John," she whispered, "surely, surely, he is not dead?"

"Ay, dear, he has passed away from all troubles here, and will find a more merciful judge there than any in an earthly court," he answered her, solemnly.

"Dead!" she murmured as her fingers relaxed their hold, and she slipped from his arms to the floor, in a swoon.

He looked down upon the prostrate form with his breast full of pity. Then, lifting her, he laid her gently upon the sofa, and went to seek restoratives.

CHAPTER X.

SIR ERIC DU VAL SAVES HIS WIFE.

CLARE JARDINE knew nothing of the terrible troubles which had taken place at "Willowdene," nor had she the faintest idea that it had passed into the hands of strangers.

On the night on which she left her home, she went out into the world with the man she loved, his promised wife.

Sir Eric had a carriage waiting at a little distance along the road, which took them to a railway station where Clare had never been, and was not known, and they travelled to London; and leaving her there in a suite of rooms, he promised to see her as often as he could, but explained that he would not take his regimental leave until the time of their marriage, when they would go to Scotland together.

She agreed to his wishes, but it was very lonely for her in her London lodging.

However, he kept his promise of running up to see her often, and when the three Sundays had been spent in London, they were married.

It was a very different sort of wedding to that which Clare had pictured for herself. The newly-opened church was close, stuffy, and melancholy looking.

There were no onlookers at all, save the people in connection with the church, whose duty it was to be there.

It was an old-fashioned edifice, and the gloom cast a shadow over the girl's feelings.

As she entered the building upon Sir Eric's arm, a great trembling seized upon her.

"Oh! Eric," she murmured, "what a dreadful old place! and I have thought of my wedding as such a bright affair."

"So it is bright, darling, since it binds us together. It matters little whether the service is performed in a cathedral or a barn, so long as we are happy together. Come, cheer up, little one, for your old Eric loves you with all his heart, and he thinks you reciprocate his affection truly."

"I do. Have I not proved it?" she murmured.

"Yes, sweetheart! and I will do my best to make you happy. Never mind about the lack of bridesmaids, and an admiring throng; as to the pretty dresses, the costume you wear is lovely, and you may order just as many as ever you like."

Clare was attired in silver-grey corded silk, trimmed richly with ostrich feathers of a delicate pink, and orps to match, and her bonnet was of the same shades and material.

It certainly did not look like a wedding dress, but it would have been a rarely elegant garden-party or flower-show toilet, and the girl looked sweetly pretty in it.

There, in that gloomy church, Clare promised to be true, until death, to the man she loved, without one thought of the aching heart of honest John Burton.

The bride and bridegroom drove in a hired brougham to the hotel where Sir Eric had put up the night before, and they enjoyed a very *recherché* little dinner together; picked up Clare's luggage at her lodging, and drove to the railway station.

Sir Eric had taken great pains in his choice of a home for his darling, which he gave her for her own as a wedding present in a "deed of gift."

That home was all her fancy had ever pictured.

It was standing upon high ground, with a great blue mountain in the distance behind, and the purple heather-clad moor coming down to the cultivated land which formed her garden.

Upon the right stood a great brown crag of rock, against which the sea burst in silver-crested, storm-tossed waves, flinging the white foam with an angry roar high up the rugged brown surface.

The cottage itself was exquisite; built with many gables of grey stone, and coloured glass windows, with a verandah all around, up the pillars of which grew beautiful climbing flowers and evergreens.

French windows opened out on to a lawn as soft as plush, bordered with flower-beds rich with jewel-like blossoms; then there was a terrace walk overlooking the broad, blue ocean, at the end of which was a winding avenue of blue pine trees, relieved by the tender green of the larch, which wound down the hill-side to the beach below, where stood boat-houses, containing boats of various sizes.

A more perfect spot could scarcely have been mentally imagined than "Glenmoor," the exquisite home to which Sir Eric Du Val brought his bonnie young bride.

Their honeymoon passed but too swiftly, and in it they had nothing left to desire. They had a lovely tennis ground, boating, and as much riding and driving as they liked, and during those two months of perfect happiness they were never apart.

It was all that Clare had pictured in her early day-dreams, and she gave a little sigh of delicious satisfaction as she thought how fully all her wishes had been realized.

She was then sitting in a luxurious lounging chair upon the terrace, overlooking the sea, and Sir Eric was close by her side in another. She turned and saw a cloud upon his brow, and placed her small hand upon his.

"Eric, what is it?" she asked with a sudden fear. "Are you not happy with me?"

"With you! ay, truly, dear; but I was just thinking how wretched I shall be apart from you."

"Apart from me?" and she regarded him with startled eyes.

"Yes! that is my trouble. Clare, I cannot always be on leave, you know. I am a soldier, and must attend to my duty."

"Ah! how sorry I shall be to leave here, Eric, dear," she answered, softly; "but, after all, it cannot matter much, so long as we are together;" and she laid her head upon his shoulder lovingly.

"Don't make it harder for me; you will break my heart if you speak like that. We can't always be together, darling; and I told you long ago that I had a trouble into which no one could enter. I must return to the regiment alone; but I hope my pet will be happy in her home. You may be sure I shall always be thinking of my dear, wee wife, and I will write to her daily; and I will fly to her the moment I can get away, as a bird to its mate. Clare! Clare! for Heaven's sake don't look like that. What ails you, my darling?"

"Eric, are you ashamed of your choice?" she inquired, turning a very white face towards him.

"No, a thousand times no, little love!"

"Then why cannot you take me with you? Eric, what is your secret?"

He caught her in his arms.

"It would be a secret no longer if I told you, sweet one. Don't be childish. Be content with knowing you have the love of my heart."

But Clare was not content, and very bitter to her was the parting with her husband. He kept his promise, and wrote to her very often; moreover, he paid her many flying visits.

It was a great trouble to her that she could not take up her position in the world as his wife, and that he still forbade her writing to her parents.

She inquired for her brother, Cecil, and was startled by Sir Eric's reply that he had exchanged regiments and gone to India.

Clare had lived two years in her lonely little home when her great life-trouble came.

Sir Eric was with her again. His love for her seemed greater than ever, and he was talking of leaving the service, and giving up the world to share Clare's little Eden, when one of his servants came to tell him that two ladies were caught by the tide behind the "Mohr," the name by which the great brown rock was known, and that they would assuredly be drowned if help was not rendered them.

Sir Eric was ready in a moment. He said he would pull round the "Mohr" himself and pick up the ladies, who, he was informed, had been sketching round the coast, and Clare decided to go with him.

The boat was soon upon the waves, and Sir Eric took one of his men to render assistance. The act of rescue was as simple as A B C; nevertheless, in a quarter of an hour the two ladies would have lost their lives, for the tide at that corner rose with extraordinary rapidity, and was too fierce and strong to combat.

As Sir Eric helped the second lady into the boat, a stifled exclamation fell from his lips, and Clare saw that his face was ashen-hued. It was evident these two had met before.

"Eric," said the lady, "it is strange that you should save me. I am afraid you would rather not have known I was there!"

The speaker was a tall, fine woman of a somewhat masculine type, and very plain. There was not a touch of softness or gentleness about her. She was thoroughly matter-of-fact, stern, and unsympathetic, but she was just.

The lips of Sir Eric moved, but no sound issued from them, and there was a look of agony in his eyes.

"Lady Anna," continued she, turning to her companion, "you have often wished to know my phantom husband, and now I can introduce you to him. Lady Anna Deering, Sir Eric Du Val!"

There was a cry, low and heartrending, and Clare fell forwards white as death.

"What ails the child?" inquired she, coldly.

"For the love of Heaven be silent!" he prayed. "Say what you will to me when we are alone!"

She obeyed him, and when Sir Eric had carried his poor wounded white dove to her cot, and left her with her maid, he descended with hard set features to the drawing-room, where the two ladies awaited him.

"Lady Anna is my friend, you can speak freely before her," she said. "What have you been doing? No good, I fear. I never imagined for one moment that you had the faintest feeling towards me. I know perfectly that we decided to marry to secure to ourselves the vast fortune which your ridiculous old uncle left to a lunatic asylum if we declined to carry out his wishes. He was only fit for an inmate when he made such a will. We agreed to marry, and to part at the church door, which we did, and until to-day I never have had the pleasure of seeing you again. My life has been an open book. Lady Anna has been my daily and hourly companion, and we have enjoyed my money vastly. Now, I ask, what have you been doing, Eric? I have the right to know that!"

"Georgina, I throw myself on your mercy," he faltered.

"Ah! I thought so. You have ruined the life of that mere child!"

"I married her!"

"Pshaw! you couldn't marry her!"

"Georgina, I loved her with all my heart. I would have given up all my fortune for her sake!"

"Loved her, yet you spoil her life! Rubbish! I don't believe in such love. Leave her this very hour, and I will not blazon this affair abroad. Remain here, and I will myself report your conduct to the Horse Guards. You know whether Her Majesty would retain you in the army. You are the last man, I think, to face disgrace. I will see the poor child safe back among her people!"

"People! She has only a mother in England."

"All the better for her."

"My poor Clare! she will break her heart!"

"Not she. Hearts don't break. I have let you off very cheap!"

"This house is her own," continued Sir Eric, "and I settled enough money on her to keep it up. Let her stay here if she will."

"Certainly; but, of course, she won't when she knows the truth."

It was a long time before poor Clare did know the truth.

She had brain fever, and went quite off her head for many months, and Sir Eric's real wife nursed her all through her illness, with no tenderness but with a strong sense of justice. And when Clare rightly understood matters, her nurse wore widow's weeds; for Sir Eric's regiment had gone to India, and he had been killed in a border skirmish.

Lady Du Val smiled a hard smile as she read of him in the paper as an honourable gentleman and gallant soldier. His gallantry was undoubted, but, with that poor broken flower upstairs, she could not admit his honour.

When Clare was well enough she heard the whole truth from Lady Du Val; and declining to remain at Glenmohr or to accept her help or assistance, she went to London, and from thence on to Willowdene.

CHAPTER XI.

FOR OLD LOVE'S SAKE.

It was long before Mrs. Jardine in the least got over the fearful shock of the disappearance of her daughter, the tragic death of her husband, and the loss of her home.

John Burton proved more than a son to her in her great trouble, and she did her best to repay him by most tenderly caring for his

mother, to whom she proved the greatest comfort; and although the poor soul could not speak, she managed to make those two who loved her comprehend all her wishes, one of which was that Mrs. Jardine should never leave her son, but be a mother to him; and John and she promised that it should be so.

Just one year after her arrival at Honour Oak Farm Mrs. Burton quietly passed away with both their hands in hers, and a radiant smile upon the wan worn features.

Poor John lay with his head bent against his dead mother's pillow, the picture of despair. She had been so very much to him, and he felt unequal to the task of saying "Thy will be done."

Her very weakness and dependence upon him made her more dear, and he felt this second blow coming upon the other overwhelmingly.

He had two comforters in his sorrow, Mrs. Jardine and Rhoda Maylie, who had been as a daughter to Mrs. Burton for many years.

The old Pastor of Honour Oak did not outlive John's mother very long; and as the farmer was sitting by his bedside, Rhoda came in to bring him some beef-tea. When she had retired again, the Vicar looked at John searchingly.

"That is a good girl, Burton," he said.

"I am sure of it," he answered, warmly.

"No one could look in her face and doubt it."

"She will make a splendid wife!" continued the old man. "John, I know about your disappointment, and fear it was a bitter one."

"It was," he answered, shortly. "I loved Clare with all my heart."

"Ay, lad, but how few folks marry their first love. Rhoda would make you happy, and I am sure she cares for you. Remember, when I am gone she will be homeless."

"I will give her a home with pleasure," said John, gravely. "She can be a daughter to Mrs. Jardine, but I shall never marry now. When a man clean gives away his heart he can't get it back again, and where Clare is there it will be. With such a pretty face and winsome way, Miss Maylie need not be long without a sweetheart."

Rhoda's adopted father told her what John had said, and her cheeks blushed, but otherwise she was calm.

She declined John Burton's offer of a home, and went as governess to a rich family in the neighbourhood; and soon after she heard from Cecil Jardine, who told her of the great affection he had for her, and the hope he had of winning her one day, and how that hope kept him in the right road, and Rhoda began to take a strong interest in the young soldier, a fact that Mrs. Jardine encouraged for both their sakes.

She felt that Cecil would brighten Rhoda's life, while she would help him to be a good man with her sweet gentle ways; and John smiled as he heard them talk together, satisfied that it would end in a happy union one day.

It was a beautiful summer evening, and John Burton, somewhat tired with his day of haymaking, was sitting under the verandah, avowedly smoking; but he was in a thoughtful mood, and his pipe had gone out long before.

Mrs. Jardine was sitting just within the window, and her busy fingers were at rest for once in her lap.

The twilight was coming on, and in the blue arch of heaven a pin-prick of the brightness above was peeping through.

Both were thinking of the dear ones who had passed through the doors of death, and it seemed as if the gates were still ajar, so near they felt to be to them.

Then it was of Clare they thought. It was the mother who breathed her name.

"It was a night just like this, John," she said, "when Clare went away. Was it not wondrous strange what became of her? Perhaps she is dead. I have often thought it

must be so, since she has never written to me."

"No, no, she is not dead, or my heart would tell me so. Mother, one day Clare will come back. I have pictured her return so often that I find it difficult to unravel truth from fancy. Even now I could believe I heard her light footstep upon the gravel path."

"Ah! that is only fancy, John. And if she were to come?" she questioned, brokenly.

"Ay, if she were, mother, we should give her a loving welcome. Should we not?"

"If? Oh, yes. But you, John—you? Could you forgive her?"

"I reckon God has a longer score against me than I can have against Clare," he answered, low.

"But John, if someone has wronged her—" and the mother's voice broke with a sudden pain.

"I would break every bone in his cowardly body!"

There was a rustle among the bushes hard by, and a slight sable clad figure stood before them.

"If he lived John, if he lived," she murmured; "but he has gone to answer before a higher tribunal than any which could be convened here for his sin. John—mother—I have come home. Can you forgive me?" and she sank down upon her knees before them.

It was John Burton who raised her so tenderly, and they led her in and closed the French windows for greater privacy.

Then Clare confessed to them all the truth; how she had loved Sir Eric Du Val and deceived them for years, and ran away with him; of her great happiness, broken into by his leaving her; of her discovery of his treachery; of the real Lady Du Val's conduct, Sir Eric's desertion of her, and early death upon the battle-field.

Then for a few moments there was silence.

"Poor child!" said John, pitifully. "You have paid dearly for your own way. We will let you have rest and peace now. I will not torment you with my love; but, Clare, it is yours as it has always been, and if you ever wish to fulfil your engagement I shall be ready. We cannot quarrel now as to whether my mother shall live with us; but, remember, I will never part with yours."

Clare was very humble. She stooped and kissed the great brown sunburnt hand at which she had laughed in former days.

She was altogether heartbroken, and the news she had learnt at "Willowdene" from strange lips had been the last straw on the camel's back.

John troubled her with no love-making as of yore, but strove to please her in all things, studying her every wish and whim.

More than a year later Cecil returned from India on leave, and lost no time in proposing to Rhoda Maylie, who, having told him of her first fancy for John Burton, was forgiven, and the two were very happy.

Clare was sitting with a little jewel-box in her hand, and thinking herself alone, she took from it two rings—her old engagement-ring with John, and its keeper.

He entered much as he had done the day their engagement was broken off, and stood before her.

"I have often wondered what you did with those, Clare," he said, smiling at her.

"I couldn't send them back, John," she faltered.

"Why not, when you had given me up?"

"Ah! I do not know. I couldn't. The human heart is curiously inconsistent. I often looked at them when I was lonely, and thought of you and all your goodness to me, John," and there were tears in the long-forgotten lashes.

He stooped over her.

"Shall I put them on again, Clare?" he asked.

"Is it possible you can wish it?"

"Yes! You are the only woman who can ever be my wife."

"John," she whispered, "I love you now as I never thought to love anyone; not because you are charming, rich, or handsome, but because I know you to be honest as the day and good as tried gold," and she held up her finger for the ring.

"Let the dead past bury its dead, darling. And from now let us begin life afresh together, remembering that we are not children to toy with duty, but earnest men and women, who have much to do before we gain our rest."

"You shall lead me, John," she answered, low, as his arm clasped once more around her; and she found a haven of refuge upon the heart which she had saddened, which had beat only for her so long.

There was a double wedding at the little old ivy-clad church, where Rhoda's adopted father's voice was wont to be heard, and the village folks smiled to think the children who had grown up among them were made happy at last.

Clare's story was never known, and bold would that man have been who ventured to question honest John Burton about his wife.

[THE END.]

GRANDMOTHER'S GHOST.

"The idea!" gasped Mrs. Gibbs, wrathfully. "The idea! What's come over you. I'd like to know—a bounding down as if the swine of the scripture was in you! What have you seen—or done?"

Annie Moss, who was the sister of Mrs. Gibbs, but who had never been proudly able to change the prefix of her name from four letters to three, sank down in a limp heap on the gaily-cushioned kitchen chair.

"A ghost," she gasped—"I've seen a ghost!"

Her sister gave a disdainful snort. "Get out! You ain't been well since you had the measles last spring. A ghost! Rubbish!"

Then she went on beating up the sponge for her bread with a vigour that was characteristic.

Tall was Mrs. Gibbs and bony, independent and assertive to the point of aggression. She had the farm to manage, her children to subdue, her husband to suppress.

Ghosts! She had no time to waste on ghosts.

She thought that Annie was a drone, that she had time for any nonsense. Indeed, all Annie had to do was to keep the kitchen clean and darn the stockings and scrub the pantry and make the clothes for the five children, and bring in the cobs and keep the apples and onions picked over, and sweep the upstairs rooms, and weed the flower-beds, and churn four times a week, and keep the windows washed, and shoe the hens out of the lettuce and young peas.

That was all. Perhaps that, considering the fact that Annie was quite stout and inclined to be rheumatic, was really enough.

"Up in the garret!" she averred. "I run up to get them Easter eggs that was cracked, and that was put away in the wicker basket on the shelf in the north-east corner. I thought how fine they would be to pizen the mice with if they was well ground up with an ounce of Paris green. An' just as I put out my hand for them, I seen it—her!"

"I wish," declared Mrs. Gibbs, right angrily, as she put a cloth over her bread sponge, "that you'd get some sense, Annie Moss. You're old enough to have a bit."

This taunt was not to be borne.

Miss Annie rose with a dignity that contrasted comically with her dumpliness and chubbiness.

"I'm old enough to know when a house is haunted, an' I'm old enough to have the sense

to leave that house just as quick as I kin get out!"

Mrs. Gibbs stared, aghast. This was a case of the worm turning with a vengeance! She would be obliged to hire help if Annie were to leave, and that would be appalling.

"Perhaps you're right," she assented, soothingly. "But don't say anything about it before Joe, the boys, nor that young fly-away of a Phyllis. She has enough nonsense in her head already, that she has. You and me can go up to the garret when all the others is asleep, and if there is a ghost, it will walk out when the clock strikes twelve. That's what spectres does. Now here they come. Keep still!"

"They" were Joe Gibbs and his three sons. He was spare of stature, sandy of hair, straggly of beard; his expression conveying the impression of crushed and unappreciated mediocrity. The boys were awkward, loose-jointed little chaps.

"Sit down!" commanded Mrs. Gibbs, rather sternly. "Dinner has been ready this half-hour. Annie, call the twins, will you?"

Annie, whom the extorted confession of credence in her story had somewhat mollified, went in search of Ivy and Myrtle, which were the names with which Mrs. Gibbs had seen fit to brand her diminutive daughters.

They were all seated round the supper table in the amber light of the July evening, when the kitchen door banged inward, and that "fly-away Phyllis," made her appearance.

Sweet seventeen was Phyllis. She was slender as seventeen is usually. Her dress was of pale blue gingham, and her hat was a cheap straw. But the gown was fashioned in Empire fashion, and had quite an air, and the little hat was most artistically trimmed with sweet-pea blossoms.

And quite as pink as those make-believe flowers were her cheeks, and of a still deeper tint her arched lips. She had big brown stars of eyes, and straight dark brows, and heavy braids of reddish-golden hair. Altogether she was a vision to glorify the rather dreary farmhouse kitchen.

"What kept you?" asked Mrs. Gibbs, sourly.

"Oh, I met some of the girls, and they were talking about the big fancy-dress garden party Mrs. Eames is to give on her son's birthday. He is to be home just the day before. I wish I could go!"

"Well, you can't?" snapped her Aunt Annie. "As I told you when you was first asked, you haven't a dress, an' we can't afford to buy you one—that's why."

Phyllis said nothing, but she knew in her heart it was not why.

If she had been asked to a party at the house of the next neighbour or of the village butcher, she would have been given a new dress—yes, even a fancy dress—for Mrs. Gibbs could be both lenient and liberal when she chose.

But she was prejudiced against serene and aristocratic Mrs. Eames. Perhaps because the latter, who was the great lady of the neighbourhood, seemed to be only dimly aware of her existence.

Mrs. Gibbs was never invited there. Her visit there was not returned.

However, Phyllis was a prime favourite. She was asked to share in all the fine doings. Her beauty, her amiability, her accomplishments made her desired and honoured.

So her aunt, who could not get a finger into the Eames pie to save her soul, and who felt not a little soured and resentful at being left out in the cold, resolved she would put a stop to her niece's going.

By way of vindicting her course to herself, Annie Moss told herself that when Fred Eames was home last year, he was a great deal more attentive to Phyllis than a young man of his wealth and prospects ought to be to a girl in her position. She would see that for the future he had no chance of trifling with her affections.

Supper was over. By nine o'clock most of the household were sound asleep.

Joe Gibbs had his tired toes tucked under the patchwork coverlet. At half-past nine, Phyllis came in from her walk with Jeanne Gray, and went to her own little room, which opened off that where the twins slept.

And at ten the conspirators—if that be not too harsh a word for two inquisitive elderly ladies—found themselves all alone in the trimly-tidied sitting-room.

"Let's keep still till Phyllis gets to sleep. She's so quick of hearing!" cautioned Mrs. Gibbs.

"How'll we know when she is?" queried practical Annie.

"Can't you leave that to me?" tartly counter-questioned the competent and diplomatic matron.

She went over and took her stand by the window. She was watching a certain slim lance of light that lay across the grass. She was rather cross.

She had no faith in this spectre of her sister's. But the threat of the afternoon had dismayed her not a little. She might as well gratify her, and perhaps prove her hallucination!

Half-past ten!

The light went out.

"Now!" whispered Mrs. Gibbs.

They began preparations. They took off their slippers: that was to render their footsteps inaudible. They lighted a lantern: that was to leave just outside the garret door. They gingerly secured Joe's revolver: that was to put a bullet through the ghost if it turned out to be a burglar.

The murderous suggestion had come from Mrs. Gibbs, and for once it was Annie's turn to be contemptuous.

"Burglars don't peek out of a dark corner of the garret at five o'clock in the evening!" she had responded, incredulously. "Nor they ain't usually beautiful young brides. Nor they don't wear white satin gowns."

All of which had caused Mrs. Gibbs to regard her with very serious doubts as to her sanity.

As they passed Phyllis's door they paused. The door was ajar.

Mrs. Gibbs sent a keen glance into the little room. It was filled with summer moonlight. In the radiance she could see that the bed was vacant.

"Phyllis ain't there," she whispered, a kind of a shock passing through her. "P'raps she's in the twins' room."

But she was not. They forgot their ghost hunt. Annie lit a lamp. Armed with that and the lantern they went through the house. They aroused Joe and the boys. Nowhere could Phyllis be found. All joined in the search.

"Perhaps she's eloped!" ventured Annie, with an ecstatic giggle.

But the fact that her hat and scarf were in her room helped to cast doubt on the suggestion.

When almost an hour had passed, and no trace of her was found, they began to be thoroughly alarmed.

"I knowed when I see that ghost it meant bad luck," whimpered Annie. "Maybe it come to fetch her."

The ghost! Instantly Mrs. Gibbs remembered she had not tried if Phyllis were in the garret. The idea was absurd. The garret was given over to lumber. But helter-skelter up she ran, all the others after her.

She was almost at the head of the last little narrow stairway, Joe behind her, Annie following him, and the boys bringing up the rear, when from below came an awful sound—the sharp, clear report of a revolver. And this was followed by howls of pain and terror.

"Ivy!" quavered Annie.

"Myrtle!" shrieked Mrs. Gibbs.

Quite forgetful of Phyllis, all turned to rush downward, when the garret door was flung wide open, and there stood a youthful and slender figure, gowned all in scintillating white.

"The ghost!" screamed Annie.

And down they tore in breathless dismay to

the room where stood the twins in their night-gowns.

Ivy was bleeding from a flesh wound in the shoulder. She had been accidentally shot by Myrtle, who had been awakened by the search for Phyllis, and who had found the revolver her mother had laid down.

There was a veritable reign of pandemonium, and into the midst of the universal distraction came the girl in the snowy draperies.

"The ghost!" yelled the boys.

"Nonsense!" said Phyllis. "I'm no ghost. What's all this fuss about? How did it happen that Ivy was hurt? Are you all crazy?"

Phyllis, sure enough!

It was several moments before she could make any sense out of their excited explanation.

She knelt down beside Ivy, took a silk tie out of the drawer of the dressing-case, and began bandaging the injured arm.

"If you will keep still a minute, all of you, I will tell you. I was determined to go to that fancy-dress at the Eames'. But I had no dress. There—there, Ivy! don't cry. Then I remembered this old one of grandma's. But she was tall and stout; so I had to make a good many alterations. And I told Miss Finch about it. So she let me have the loan of a wire figure to drape it on. It was the figure with the pretty wax face she used to have when she did dressmaking and millinery. We smuggled it up to the garret the evening all you folks went down to the creek after wild plums. There, dear! it is all right now. I thought no one would be going up to the garret, now that house-cleaning was well over. And I had just got through draping it to night—the dress, I mean—and had tried it on, when I heard the commotion. Now, Ivy, you'll be all well soon. And the wire model isn't a ghost; neither am I."

Which by this time was very evident indeed.

But Mrs. Gibbs was not to be pacified.

"You've caused us a heap of scare an' trouble to night, Phyllis. That Fred Eames has turned your head. Do you suppose his high-toned mother would make so much fuss about you if she knewed the way he was a-running after you last summer? Do you think she'd ask you to her party?"

Phyllis grew very white. She put her hand in her bosom, drew out a hoop of glittering diamonds, slipped it on her finger.

"Mrs. Eames helped Fred to select this. She knows we are to be married when he gets his diploma. Have you anything else to say?"

But dumbfounded Mrs. Gibbs could utter never a word!

TWO WEDDINGS.

—o—

The Poles were an "old family." Most families are old, since anybody's grandfathers and grandmothers may be counted up in the most wonderful compound-interest sort of manner, if one chooses to take the trouble; but the Poles somehow felt themselves older than other folks; and as there were now only two of that particular branch alive it seemed likely that they would soon also have that other much admired quality of being very rare.

The Poles, in fact, thought so highly of their family that they could think of no other fit to mix with it, and remained single at an age when most people find themselves married. They were very like each other—high nosed, thin, with prominent white teeth and scanty reddish hair. They appeared to remain thin because they thought it more genteel to do so than to become fat, and while Mr. Pole thought it proper to have constant interviews with his lawyer, Miss Pole believed it proper to say that she knew nothing about

business whatever. However, her great boast was that she had never had an offer. Most spinsters are constantly declaring that they have had a hundred offers, but Miss Pole's pride was all the other way.

"No man has ever dared to approach me with any such suggestion," she would cry. "My conduct has ever been too particular."

Mrs. James, the family housekeeper, had a habit of shrugging her shoulders when Miss Pole made this remark; but the housekeeper was a widow, and could not be supposed to understand a spinster's feelings. She was a little, plump, black-haired woman, with a high colour, who naturally took to reds and yellows. She had seen better days, and was no common housekeeper, in her own opinion. At least, she used to think to herself she was much handsomer than her aristocratic mistress.

"If that everlasting old maid was only out of the way," she used to think, "I could marry Mr. Pole to-morrow. He admires me."

And here she was not wrong. But for the old family and the bondage of aristocracy, her master might indeed have become her suitor. However, though King Cophetua came down from his throne to marry the beggar-maid, it never occurred to the solitary male representative of the Poles, that he could descend from the parlours of his mansion to the housekeeper's room.

Love, they say, is blind. Miss Pole was not considered beautiful generally, but there was one who thought her so. This was Terence Bolt her father's amanuensis.

He used to put on his near-sighted glasses to look after her when she went up the street.

"Isn't so much her features," he would say to himself, "nor her figure, either. It's a kind of an air, what the French call her *tout ensemble*, that takes me. And when she goes up the street with her head in the air and her skirt going flip flap over the pavement, I think of Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh," and thereupon poor Silas would carefully examine the elbows of his dusty writing jacket, and wonder whether on an occasion of muddy crossings he might win the affections of the virgin Pole, by spreading this threadbare garment before her, as Raleigh spread his cloak at the feet of the virgin queen.

Unhappy Mr. Bolt! He dared not even tell his love, but only expressed it by writing poetry, which was constantly being "declined with thanks" by every editor in the land. Thus the housekeeper was ready to be loved by the lord of the land, and the secretary worshipped the lady in secret, and nothing seemed likely to come of it.

However, Cupid, who is always ready for mischief, under-rated all, and went to church one sunny Sunday morning behind the aristocratic Pole carriage, and hid behind a column of the sacred edifice to play strange tricks.

The sermon was over; the benediction given. The housekeeper, who had taken care to put her bright bonnet in direct range of her master's eye, had hurried home to oversee the dinner. Mr. Bolt, who had been gazing at Miss Pole when he should have been looking at his prayer-book, went to the door to see her step into her carriage. For some reason, Mr. Pole was delayed. The fact was, he had dropped his eye-glasses, and as he could not see without them, to find them was on his knees on the floor of his pew, rummaging for them. Nobody saw him. Everyone hurried home.

The sexton locked the door, and Miss Pole, out of all patience, waited and wondered in her carriage. Finally she espied Mr. Bolt posed beside a column in an attitude of respect, and called to him in a tone of just indignation.

"Mr. Bolt! Here, please! My brother must have gone home without me. Will you kindly drive me home?"

Poor Bolt could not believe his own eyes.

Drive Miss Pole! Sit beside her in that sacred vehicle! Could it be? In his joy he forgot that he knew nothing about driving. He jumped in, seized the reins and did something with them, he knew not what. The horse was newly purchased; he had never been driven to church before; and it occurred to him that the eccentric person who was trying to put his mouth open with the bit wanted him to go as fast as he could back to Blackberryville. Away he flew as though he were put upon his mettle to win a race, and vainly did Mr. Pole cry: "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" Nothing would stop him. He flew up the street, overtaking scattered members of the congregation. Everyone saw the trap and who sat in it. And so on upon the high-road, the distracted Bolt urging him on while he desired to stop him.

"Where are we going?" gasped Miss Pole. "I don't know," cried Bolt; "Whoa! Whoa! Are—you frightened?" "Dreadfully," gasped Miss Pole; but on they flew until, after making such time as had never been heard of upon that road, the foaming animal paused at his old owner's gate, with a jerk that tossed Miss Pole into Mr. Bolt's arms and brought the watch-dog to the gate in a fury.

Nobody was at home. The horse could go no farther.

Mr. Bolt left his fainting fair one on a mossy bank, and went in search of a vehicle. There was none to be hired.

The omnibuses of that part of the world were pious and kept Sunday. So were the cabs. At five o'clock Miss Pole resolved that she must up and take a bed at the hotel, and accordingly, having thanked Mr. Bolt for his great bravery, and having assured him that he had saved her life, retired and left him.

He also hired a little room near the roof, where he lay awake and dreamed of the moment when Miss Pole's bonnet touched his hair and her kid-glove rested on his arm. At last he slept. Loud knocks aroused him from his slumbers, and a chambermaid informed him that "the lady was taken very bad."

He rushed down stairs. In the parlour sat Miss Pole, in a fainting condition. She held in her hand the morning paper, and pointed to a paragraph headed:

ELOPEMENT EXTRAORDINARY IN HIGH LIFE. Just prior to going to press we received the following news: The sister of our most respected citizen, Mr. Pole, eloped yesterday from the church door, with his private secretary, Mr. Bolt, in whom he had placed the most implicit confidence. The lady has heretofore been much respected, and is no longer young. They bribed the sexton to look Mr. Pole up in the church until they could make their escape.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Miss Pole. "What shall I do?"

"Scorn them!" said Mr. Bolt. "Insolent wretches!"

"I shall never hold my head up again!" sobbed Miss Pole.

But before the last ejaculation had more than passed her lips, Mr. Bolt seized her hand.

"There is one way to silence them," said he. "Let us do it in earnest. I have long adored you. Be mine, adored one!"

There was a balm in this to one who had been spoken of as "no longer young."

"How eloquent he is!" she thought. "And what fine eyes he has! And he has been so noble in hiding his admiration so long."

"Say 'Yes!'" pleaded Mr. Bolt. "You'll be Mrs. Bolt! I'll fight any one who breathes a word against you!"

Miss Pole permitted him to kiss her hand, and they walked together to the minister's house, and prudently hired a boy to drive them home afterwards.

Meanwhile Mr. Pole sat gloomily in his breakfast-room, when Mrs. James entered. She, too, had seen the paper, and seemed to have been crying over it. Yet she looked very pretty.

"It's dreadful of Miss Pole, sir," she said. "I'd never have thought it of her. And now I've come to bid you good-bye, sir. I've got to go, you know; it can't be helped."

"Go!" cried Mr. Pole.

"Yes, sir. It wouldn't be proper for me to stay in a bachelor's house!" sighed Mrs. James. "I can't have a word said against me, sir!"

How pretty she looked in her wine-coloured merino and with her hair in those smooth ripples. Mr. Pole forgot the family.

"Remain as my wife," he said. "We'll be married to-morrow."

"Oh!" cried the housekeeper. And he was obliged to support her fainting form in his arms.

At this moment the bell rang, the door opened, and Mr. Bolt entered with the late Miss Pole on his arm.

"What do I see?" cried this lady, in horror.

"What have you done, Nina?" cried her brother.

"Nothing but get married," said Mr. Bolt, loftily. "Mrs. Bolt, sir."

The housekeeper, who had recovered from her swoon with miraculous celerity, now assumed an attitude of great dignity, and remarked,—

"I am glad this escapade has turned out so well. It was a very strange performance; but we'll forgive you."

"You'll forgive me?" cried Mrs. Bolt.

"Certainly, Nina," said her brother, drawing Mrs. James' plump hand through his arm.

"I have decided to set a steadier person at the head of my house. Mrs. James will become my wife to-morrow. Your property is your own, or I would disinherit you; but you may stay until you can pack your clothes; perhaps it will be better."

"Much better!" cried the future Mrs. Pole, "for the credit of the family."

The Poles merely bow when they meet each other. Mr. Pole always speaks of his sister's marriage as "that escapade," and Mrs. Bolt calls her brother's wife "that designing person."

FACETIÆ.

A SMALL boy defined a holiday as a day to holler in.

BECAUSE a man shakes in his shoes it is no sign he has a fit.

GIRLS who wear feathers around their necks now-a-days are not all chickens.

YOU never know how fond you are of a boy until you become engaged to his sister.

ALL animals have their good points, but for abundance of the same none can compete with the porcupine.

WHY are cobblers eligible for medical diplomas? Because they are skilled in the art of healing.

WHEN a man pours "bottles of champagne" down him, his wife pours "vials" of wrath on him.

A WOMAN never hits a hen when she throws a missile at it; but, alas! a man is not a hen.

"WHAT was that noise I heard in the parlour last night, Maria?" "It was William breaking his engagement."

SHE: "All extremely bright men are awfully conceited." HE: "Oh, I don't know; I'm not."

ELDERLY BOARDER: "How did you sleep last night, professor?" PROFESSOR LARKIN (castly): "Lying down, madam."

"THIS tree seems to be loaded with apples," remarks the stranger. "Yes, sir," replies the rural miss; "pop says this is a good apple year." "I am glad to hear that. Are all your trees as full of apples as this one?" "Oh, no. Only the apple trees."

MRS. STONE: "What is the difference between an investment and a speculation, dear?" KIRBY STONE: "If you lose it's a speculation."

HE: "Will you be mine, Miss Johnstone?" SHE: "I will, George." HE: "This is so sudden. Will you—er—give me time to think it over?"

THE earth is said to have two motions, but to a drunken man coming home at eleven o'clock at night it doubtless has more than two hundred.

MISS WESTON: "Which of your many books do you consider of the least account, professor?" PROFESSOR WRITER: "My bank-book, Miss Weston."

EVERY young man has a private idea that the woman who gets him will win a prize. Somehow his sister entertains a different opinion.

"Whistlers are always good-natured," says a philosopher. Everybody knew that. It's the folks that have to listen to the whistling that get cross.

MRS. HIGHLANDER: "Jack and Amy's meeting and falling in love, she told me, was very romantic." MISS MURRAY: "They were sea-sick on the *Etruria* together."

A SUPERSTITIOUS mother postponed a daughter's wedding four times in order to get a bright day. Now she is looking for the missing son-in-law.

GIZZARD: "Mr. Scadds, what is the secret of becoming wealthy?" Scadds: "There is no secret, my dear young man. All you have to do is to get money and keep it."

A BEGGING letter asking for a pair of cast-off trousers closed pathetically with these words: "So send me, most honoured sir, the trousers, and they will be woven into the laurel crown of your good deeds."

"AND mamma," sobbed the unhappy wife, he threw his slippers across the room, and told me to go to the dud-dud-devil." "You did right, my poor, dear child, to come straight home to me."

ESTELLE: "Why do you seem so cast down, Maud?" Maud: "Haven't you heard that Harry Henderson is engaged to Pauline?" "Yes; but you had your chance, and rejected him." "But he only asked me three times."

HE: "The artists say that five feet four inches is the divine height for a woman." His Darling (crossly): "You know I am five feet eight." HE (quickly): "You are more than divine, dear."

"IT is terrible!" said Maud, "Papa forgot that we are living in a tenth-floor flat, and not in the one-story cottage in the country, and—he's—thrown—Chappie—H.H. Hicks—out—of—the—window!"

FOND FATHER: "Children, if the clock struck fourteen, what time would it be?" LOGICAL LOUISE: "Two o'clock, papa." CLEVER CHARLIE: "Time to get the clock mended."

"WILL you take something to drink?" "With pleasure." The photo was taken, and the sister said, "But what about that little invitation?" "Oh, sir, that is just a trade ruse of mine to give a natural and interested expression to the face."

"Now, gentlemen," said the eloquent advocate, "I leave the case in your hands. In closing I have just one remark to make." And the experienced juror in the dark corner of the box settled himself for another comfortable half-hour nap.

BRONSON: "You look all broken up, old man. What's the matter?" ORISK: "I called on Miss Pruyn last night, and no sooner had I entered the parlour than her mother appeared and demanded to know my intentions." "That must have been rather embarrassing." "Yes; but that was not the worst. Just as the old lady finished speaking, Miss Pruyn shouted down the stairs: 'Mamma, mamma, he isn't the one!'"

SOCIETY.

DRESSING conspicuously is a confession of inferiority.

ARIZONA Indian women have taken to wearing fashionable dresses, shoes and stockings.

THE King of Siam is attended by a body-guard composed exclusively of four thousand of the prettiest young women in his realm.

EMPEROR FREDERICK, of Germany, is fascinated by the genius of H. Rider Haggard, and by way of returning the compliment he has dedicated his last book to her.

THE prettiest royal girl in Eastern Europe is said to be the Princess Helena, of Montenegro, who, it is reported, is the allotted bride of the heir-apparent to the Russian throne.

PRINCE RIENSKI KORSAKOFF, head of one of the noblest families in Russia is living on goose-corn bread to set an example to his servants. Another landed proprietor has given up his property to the peasants, and gone to live with his son.

DOVE COTTAGE, at Grasmere, once the home of Wordsworth and "his exquisite sister" Dorothy, and afterwards occupied by De Quincey, has been purchased by the government, and will be restored to its former condition.

IN connection with the discussion about the Treves Holy Coat, the curious fact has been discovered that all the robes of the Cardinals have been supplied to the Vatican for more than two centuries by a Protestant firm at Birtscheld, near Aachen, which has always enjoyed a monopoly in the manufacture of cloth of this particular colour and quality.

IT is understood that the King and Queen of Italy will probably visit the Queen at Windsor soon after Her Majesty's return from the Continent next spring, and that their Majesties will also spend a few days at Buckingham Palace. As the visit is expected to take place in May, it should serve to give the season of 1892 a good send off.

WHEN one takes into consideration the fact that the Prince of Wales will complete his half century on the 9th of November, it cannot fail to be a source of gratification to think that the Queen continues to enjoy such excellent health. There are times, say the Court attendants, when it is impossible to realize that Her Majesty celebrated the Jubilee of her coronation four years ago.

THE Kaiser's latest whim, if a French journalist speaks truth, is to have a piano made entirely of stags' horns. This original piano case—for we presume that only the outside of the instrument could possibly be constructed of such a material—has taken a considerable time to manufacture; for the Kaiser is very particular and fussy about all the horns, matching with great nicety and exactitude as to size and shape.

A GERMAN woman artist recently made some beautiful painted lace, which is still the rage in Paris. The predominating hue was gold, but paint, not "bronze powder," was used, and small quantities of red and blue were introduced to suit the costume or surroundings. Its charm was the delicacy of its harmony, and it takes the actual touch of finger-tips to convince one that the yellow is not gold.

"AT San Sebastian, Spain, we were much interested," writes a lady, "by seeing the little King of Spain and his mother arrive at the beach in the mornings, and the King get to work with wheelbarrow, spade, and bucket to make wonderful things in the sand, and to fill holes with sea-water. It is not often that one sees a European sovereign thus employed; with sleeves tucked up above the elbows, and with a large straw hat that will blow off, revealing a fair-haired curly little head. He is only five years old, but even on the beach there has to be a 'suite.'"

STATISTICS.

A MILE of an English canal costs £7,000 to make.

THE census of Paris gives a population of 2,422,969.

MORE than 200,000,000 pounds of tea are consumed every year in this country.

ONE acre of land will comfortably support four persons on a vegetable diet.

THE longest tunnel in the world is in Hungary; it is in length nearly 10½ miles.

THE average length of life is considerably longer in this country than in France.

GEMS.

BRAVE actions are the substance of life, and good sayings the ornament of it.

WE hear the rain fall, but not the snow. Outward grief is loud, but true grief is silent.

WHEN we fall upon a rock we know how hard it is. When we are thrown upon our resources we learn how great they are.

IF you are idle you are on the way to ruin, and there are few stopping places upon it. It is rather a precipice than a road.

HOW easy is the thought, in certain moods, of the loveliest, most unselfish devotion! How hard is the doing of the thought in the face of a thousand unlovely difficulties!

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLES stewed with a little sugar and water, cloves, and lemon-peel till quite soft, then rubbed through a coarse sieve, are greatly improved if white of egg whipped to a stiff froth, with the addition of a little sugar, is laid over them, and either browned with a salamander or just made hot in the oven.

POTATO BALLS.—Prepare the potatoes as for scallops, form them into balls with a little flour, dip them in clarified fat. Butter as many tomatoes as there are balls, arrange them alternately with the potatoes in a greased tin, and bake in a hot oven till the tomatoes are cooked. Serve with pickled walnuts.

BISCUITS.—A pleasant change in the line of biscuit making is gained thus: Roll the dough about as thick as when the biscuit cutter is used, butter the top well, beginning with the edge nearest, roll with the hands the dough towards the farthest end of the board, then cut in thin slices, place in the pan, and bake in a quick oven. For a change these are found very nice.

FISH SOUP.—One and a half pounds of fish (trout), one onion, one small carrot, bit of turnip, some parsley, a little thyme. Have the fish nice and clean, put them on with ten breakfast cups of boiling water, add all the other things cut up in small pieces; let all boil one hour at least; strain and put back in a clean pot with one tablespoonful of corn flour, one dessert spoonful of butter, a little chopped parsley, one teaspoonful of milk, pepper and salt, boil five minutes, stirring all the time.

SPICED CRAB-APPLES.—Make a syrup in the proportion of one cup of white sugar to one of water, and spice it with cinnamon, ginger and cloves to taste, boiling the spice in little muslin bags. When the syrup is ready put into it without crowding whole crab-apples with the stems and without paring, and cook slowly until they can be pierced with a fork, but not until they are in pieces. Take out carefully, by the stems, and keep them hot while the syrup boils down a little; then put in jars, cover with the hot syrup and seal. They are rich without the spice.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ONE TENTH of the world is still unexplored.

NEARLY a quarter of all cases of insanity are hereditary.

WESTMORELAND is the most sparsely populated English county.

THE first steamship to cross the Atlantic was the *Rising Sun* in the year 1818.

THE Nordenfeldt gun, which consists of a row of rifle tubes which can be fired in rapid succession, is capable of firing six hundred rounds of bullets per minute.

PEOPLE often misuse the word education, and apply it only to the bookworm. An intelligent, observant, well-rounded farmer or business man is the best educated man in the world.

THE artificial oil of bitter almonds, now so largely employed in perfuming soap and flavouring confectionery, is prepared by the action of nitric acid on the fixed oils of castor.

COMPARATIVELY few people know that the patriotic cry "God Save the King" dates back to antiquity, and was first shouted by the multitude at the time that Saul was made ruler over the Israelites.

THE occasional lamp-post clock of Paris is a decided convenience, and being worked from a distance by a simple pneumatic connection, one would think that were it adopted here, even London soot would not necessarily put it out of gear.

THIRTEEN years ago a student in Berlin was mobbed in the streets for appearing on a bicycle. Now the German Union of Bicyclists, which has just held its eighth annual conference at Breslau, has fourteen thousand members.

JERUSALEM is rapidly becoming again the city of the Jews. In 1880 there were probably not more than 5,000 Jews there; now there are more than 30,000. The recent persecutions in Russia have led thousands of them to seek a home in their ancient city.

THE average madhouse furnishes proof that long and thick hair is not a sign of intellectuality. The easily wheedled Esau was hairy, while the mighty Caesar was bald. "Long-haired men are generally weak and fanatical, and men with scant hair are the philosophers and statesmen and soldiers of the world."

FIFTEEN thousand persons, one-third of them convicts, the rest the wives or the children who are to accompany them, are now in Moscow awaiting transportation to Siberia. As none have been sent since the new year, the number has become large. They will go in parties of from three to five hundred, and will probably reach their destination soon.

DOGS in a native or wild state never bark; they simply whine, howl and growl; the noise which we call barking is found only among those that are domesticated. Columbus found that to be the case with the dogs he first brought to America and left at large, for on his return he tells us that they had lost their propensity to bark. Scientific men say that barking is really an effort on the part of the dog to speak.

HERE are some quaint definitions given by children and collected by a clergyman: Blacksmith's shop.—The place where they make horses. I saw a man nailing on the last foot of one. Horse.—An animal with four legs, one on each corner. Ice.—Water that went to sleep in the cold. Nest egg.—The one the old hen measures by. Season.—A teacher enquired of the members of a class of children if any of them could name the four seasons. Instantly the shabby head of a five-year-old was raised, and promptly came the answer: Pepper, salt, vinegar, and mustard. Stars.—The eggs the moon has laid.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

IGNORANT.—Bodmin is the county town of Cornwall.

T. B.—The owners of the *Brussels* are Messrs. Shaw Savill & Albion Co., 34, Leadenhall-street, London, E.C.

DICK TURPIN.—We have no record of the time you refer to.

LESTER.—Leicester is a municipal borough; not a city.

MISERABLE JACK.—Yes; they absolutely debar from enlistment.

DANCY.—A person under twenty-one cannot be sued for debt.

ANXIOUS FOR INFORMATION.—The European population in Africa probably numbers about a million.

H. A. T.—An employer is not obliged to give a character to his servant.

MICHAELMAS.—Michaelmas Day is on September 29, and old Michaelmas Day on October 11.

LOTTER.—The well-known poem, "The Village Blacksmith," was written by Longfellow.

DOUCE.—Hebrides is a word of three syllables; the first and second short, the third long.

IDA.—Rhode Island is one of the United States of America. Its population in 1880 was 276,523.

A SUFFERER.—Only by a long course of medical treatment, but sometimes even that is ineffectual.

DISTRAUGHT FATHER.—You cannot place your son as a pupil engineer on board ship; only trained engineers are employed.

REGULAR READER.—Full information is given in Whitaker's *Almanack*. We could not afford the space required.

SEAMCOCK.—The highest official in Iceland is the Lord-Lieutenant, and his salary is £10,000 with £3,000 added for household expenses.

BRIDEWELL.—One of the parties to the marriage must have resided for fifteen days in the parish in which it is to be solemnized.

TOMMY.—There are numerous editions of all sorts and at all prices. Any bookseller will supply your requirements.

A LOVER OF DOGS.—The employment of dogs for drawing carts was abolished in London in 1839, and in the United Kingdom in 1854.

CURIOUSITY.—The carillon of Dudley was revived in 1860. Prior to that the late earl sat in the House of Lords as Baron Ward.

MUSICAL.—1. Fagninelli died at Nice in 1840. 2. Madame Patti was born at Madrid in 1843. 3. Brahms has never appeared in Birmingham.

PARLACEITY.—You are not obliged to contribute anything towards the maintenance of your stepfather; but you cannot take either of the courses you suggest.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—If your love were of the right kind you would be more solicitous for the girl's happiness than your own dignity.

AN ANXIOUS ONE.—1. You write a good legible hand. 2. It would be more modest to be a little reticent in the presence of gentlemen than to let your tongue run away with you.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—If the child is over twelve months of age, and no money has been paid on account of it, no order can be made unless the reputed father has been out of the country.

BURGUNDY.—The name "Burgundy" was derived from an ancient German tribe, called in Latin Burgundi, or Burgundiones, who settled in that part of Gaul about 408 A.D.

MORTGAGEMENT.—You can use it for all ordinary purposes, but should you have to execute any legal document, it would be advisable to append your baptismal name.

EMIGRANT.—The Agent-General for the Cape is at 7, Albert-mansions, Victoria-street, London, S.W. Of course, we can say nothing about your chance of getting an assisted passage.

A MEMBER.—If your club manager sells beer to be consumed off the premises he may be proceeded against for selling without a license. The other matter depends on the members of the club.

FALCONER.—Immigration ships carry stewards and under-stewards, whose duty is to serve out food to the emigrants, and see that the ships' regulations in regard to other requirements are carried out.

LONGHAKES.—All apprenticeships end at twenty-one, if they do not end earlier. You had better apply to a Liverpool shipowner. Uniforms are worn on the larger, not the smaller merchant vessels.

MASTER OF THE REVELS.—The master of the revels was the name of an officer formerly attached to royal and other distinguished houses in England, whose duty it was to provide over the Christmas entertainments.

WARRIOR BOLD.—The massacre of the 24th (5 companies) took place at Isandlwana on the Tugela in Zululand, on 22nd January, 1879. Total British loss about 800 men killed. The conflict at Rorke's Drift, ten miles away from Isandlwana, was between a company of the 24th and a large force of Zulus. The latter were defeated.

DISTRESS.—The man can claim the charge of the child. If the wife becomes chargeable to the parish the husband may be compelled to contribute to her support. We cannot answer questions privately.

E. D.—£16 or £17 by F. and O. steamer. Write to that company's office, 129, Leadenhall-street, London, E.C.; also write Orient Line, 15, Fenchurch-avenue, London, E.C., also for terms.

MISS ROSE.—The pepium was an upper garment anciently worn by the Grecian, and especially by the Athenian, females. It was without sleeves, and fastened by a clasp on the arm or shoulder.

KENNETH.—It was in the middle of November last that the Bank of France advanced £3,000,000 on loan to the Bank of England in order to arrest the panic caused by the embarrassment of Baring Brothers.

DOLLY.—Purim is the name of the solemn festival among the Jews in which they commemorate their deliverance from the wiles and stratagems of Homan, as recorded in the book of Esther. It is held in February.

ROMANCE.—There are many stories of children being stolen and reared by wolves. They said the nursery well enough without being in any way substantiated by proof, and they are not usually heard outside of the nursery.

CLARE.—Coal was not known to the ancients. History does not record its first use, but it is generally conceded that it came into use in Europe first in Britain about the end of the 18th century. Ten thousand rupees is about £1,000 to £1,100.

SYLVIA.—A domestic servant under notice is entitled to the full month's pay, even if, for the convenience of the mistress, she has leave before the month is completed. She can sue for the amount in the county court.

SOME MOTHER'S CHILD.

At home or away, in the alley or street,
Wherever I chance in this wide world to meet
A girl that is thoughtless, or a boy that is wild,
My heart echoes softly, "Tis some mother's child."

And when I see those o'er whom long years have rolled,
Whose hearts have grown hardened, whose spirits are cold—

Be it woman all fallen, or man all defiled,
A voice whispers sadly, "Ah! some mother's child."

No matter how far from the right she hath strayed;
No matter what torments dishonor hath made;
No matter what elements cumbered the pearl—
Though tarnished and sullied, she is some mother's girl.

No matter how wayward his footsteps have been;
No matter how deep he is sunk in sin;
No matter how low is his standard of joy;
Though guilty and loathsome, he is some mother's boy.

That head hath been pillowed on some tender breast;
That form hath been wept o'er, those lips have been pressed;
That soul hath been prayed for, in tones sweet and mild;
For her sake deal gently with—some mother's child.

L. R.—The notice required in leaving a house should be always made the matter of agreement at the time of entering. It is impossible for us to say what you or your landlord understood in the matter if there was no written document.

CHRIS.—The harvest moon is the moon being at the full nearest to the autumnal equinox, usually about September 23. To answer your further question would take too much space, and we must refer you to some book on astronomy.

TOM'S DABBLING.—A method which would probably be successful would consist of the painting the warts with glacial acetic acid, after rubbing the surrounding skin with glycerine, to prevent the acid from destroying the skin.

JACK.—The largest sailing ship in the world is the *France*, 3,784 tons register, built of steel at Glasgow, and five-masted, owned in France; the second is the *Falgrave*, 3,187 tons register, four-masted, built of steel at Port-Glasgow, and owned in Glasgow.

ANXIOUS BESSIE.—If the husband of the woman referred to is supposed by her to be still alive, she cannot lawfully marry again, although he has been absent twelve years, and has not contributed to her support during that time.

F. L.—The coin or medal you describe is a trade token of the kind which was once very common. Hundreds were issued in the Midland district by manufacturers, traders, and others. The fullest list of them is to be found in "Boyne's Tokens."

IGNORAMUS.—The word is an adjective, and comes from two Greek ones meaning "narrow" and "an opening." It consequently means "a narrow opening." Stenopæic spectacles have an oval metal plate with a small central aperture.

HOUSEWIFE.—Butter milk is the residue after butter has been made from the cream. It contains about two-thirds of the original weight of the cream. It differs from the original milk in having lost the oleaginous matter which the milk possessed. When used for a period, it is found to be less flavoring than milk, but affords more nutriment to muscle and bone than milk affords. It is easier of digestion than milk, and is often recommended for invalids.

UNCERTAINTY.—To put it in a sentence, it will cost you, one way and another, quite £40 to take yourself and wife either to Victoria or Australia, and your prospects of employment on arrival at either place would not be very bright. Then if you want just now, you would arrive when the weather is at its hottest.

A LOVER OF THE OCEAN.—There are no apprentices taken on board Atlantic liners, nor is there any situation in those boats that can be adequately filled by boys. If you wish to be a sailor you must join a sailing ship either as apprentice, under premium, or as ordinary seaman at a small wage.

TROUBLED ONE.—If the bad breath is caused by decayed teeth have them out. That is the only cure, but meantime brush them twice or thrice daily with camphorated chalk. Indigestion is the more likely cause, and that should be cured by careful rearrangement of diet.

A SUFFERER.—Lemons are a simple and excellent remedy for biliousness. Take the juice of one or two lemons in as much water as will make it pleasant to drink without sugar, before going to bed. In the morning on rising, at least half-an-hour before breakfast, take the juice of one lemon in a tumbler of cold water.

JENNY WARM.—The 74th are at Fyzabad, Bengal; no word or prospect of their return in the meantime. By writing to Under Secretary for War, Pall-mall, London, giving your brother's name and regimental number, you can ascertain whether he is in good health still. The reply may be delayed for a little time.

ROSINA.—Owl-lamps are a novel and amusing conceit in crockery or other ware. They generally consist of a three-sided vessel, each side of which is shaped and decorated to represent an owl's head, and within the sides is a wick or a candle, which, when lighted, causes the three heads to glow with a soft light.

BLOOMER.—The trouble is due probably to nervousness, mental not physical, and timidity. The treatment should be mostly mental. Accustom yourself to meeting people and try to cultivate conversational powers. After a time you will begin to lose your self-consciousness, and then your blushes will become few and far between.

DOUGLAS.—The regulation is, "as soon as a dog reaches six months the Muzz must be taken out. The law allows no delay in taking out dog licenses." Notwithstanding this very rigid rule, persons in circumstances similar to yours favorably wait till the 1st of January before troubling the Inland Revenue authorities.

SIR ROGER.—Sir Roger de Coverley was the name of a member of the imaginary club of twelve under whose direction Addison's *Spectator* was professionally published. He was an old-school, bluff, good-hearted and simple English gentleman. The dance named after him is an English contra-dance corresponding somewhat to the Virginia reel.

BAD MEMORY.—There are several methods of strengthening the memory, all of which depend on strict attention and the gradual building up of the faculty from small beginnings. There is often a strong connection, too, between bodily health and the faculty of memory. By acquiring and preserving vigorous health, a person makes it possible for his brain to act vigorously and without the disadvantage of bodily drawbacks.

JAN.—The ballad of "Annie Robin Gray" was written by Lady Anne Lindsay, daughter of the Earl of Balcarres, and afterwards Lady Barnard. It appeared in 1772, and became very popular. As it was published anonymously various conjectures were set on foot as to its authorship. Ultimately, when Lady Barnard was an old woman, Sir Walter Scott received a letter from her, confessing that she had written it when quite a young girl.

A. G.—The term nonconformist is a general one, under which all the religious communities which do not conform to the liturgy of the church established in England may be comprehended; but it belongs more properly to the large body of clergy who at the Restoration refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, and were, in consequence, ejected from their benefices on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. This act was first promulgated by Elizabeth, and required all the clergy to use the "Book of Common Prayer," and inflicted severe penalties upon anyone who should be convicted of speaking or preaching against it. The Act of Charles I. contained still stricter provisions, enjoining every beneficed person not only to use the book, but to declare his assent and consent to every part of it, and excommunicating that unless this was done on a certain day, he should be ejected from his benefice. The Declaration of Independence of James II. afforded a temporary relief to the nonconformists; but it was not until the reign of William and Mary that they enjoyed real toleration.

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